

## The Olivet Discourse: the Coming of Christ

### *Matthew 24 - 25*

**The Olivet Discourse** can be called the “second” Sermon on the Mount (coined by Sir Robert Anderson). The first Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) was public, the second (Matt. 24-25) was private. The Olivet Discourse has to do with the coming of Christ, and can be divided into three sections:

1. The coming of Christ in relation to *Israel* (Matt. 24:3-44)
2. The coming of Christ in relation to *Christendom* (Matt. 24:45 - 25:30)
3. The coming of Christ in relation to *Gentiles* (Matt. 25:31-46)

Israel is addressed first, because Matthew’s gospel is written to the Jew.

**Prophecy.** God does not raise up prophets until the failure of a dispensation is publicly manifest. We get it in principle in Genesis 3. The prophecy of the woman’s seed was not given until man had fallen. Enoch was not raised up, with his prophecy of the appearing, until violence and corruption had filled the earth. Samuel was not raised up until Israel had rejected Jehovah from being king (1 Sam. 8:7). Isaiah was not raised up, with prophecies of the Millennial King, until the royal line of David had proven itself beyond recovery. Haggai and Zechariah were not raised up until Israel had abandoned the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 5). In like manner, the Olivet discourse was not given until Jesus had delivered the final public condemnation of the Jewish leaders, and pronounced their house “desolate” (Matt. 23). A common theme in prophecy is the pronouncement of judgment, coupled with the promise of blessing.

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## Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple (24:1-2)

### CHAPTER 24

¶ And Jesus went forth and went away from the temple, and his disciples came to *him* to point out to him the buildings of the temple. **v.1** The Lord had just disowned the temple, calling it “your house”, and stating that it was now “desolate” (Matt. 23:38-39). He now leaves the temple, which is a symbolic action, representing the setting aside of Israel by God; the glory was departing. The disciples were still occupied with the greatness of the temple buildings, and could not receive the import of what Jesus had said and done. They bid Jesus to look at, and show respect for, the grand accomplishments of man after the flesh. How little they comprehended God’s thoughts about the first man.

**2** And he answering said to them, Do ye not see all these things? Verily I say to you, Not a stone shall be left here upon a stone which shall not be thrown down. **v.2** The Lord predicted that the temple buildings which the Jews gloried in, that seemed almost indestructible, would shortly be thrown down. This was accomplished in A.D. 70, when Titus and the Roman legions sacked the city. Titus himself had commanded the temple not to be burned, but one soldier disobeyed orders:

At which time one of the soldiers, without staying for any orders, and without any concern or dread upon him at so great an undertaking, and being hurried on by a certain divine fury, snatched somewhat out of the materials that were on fire, and being lifted up by another soldier, he set fire to a golden window, through which there was a passage to the rooms that were round about the holy house, on the north side of it.<sup>1</sup>

Josephus describes how the Jews frantically tried to put the fire out, and how it grew and raged on. Archeological evidence suggests that the stones of the temple were pried apart by the Romans. One of the best explanations is that the gold which covered the temple walls melted in the fire, and flowed down into the cracks between the stones, then later the

Romans pried the stones apart to salvage the gold. What makes this seem likely is that Josephus mentions the gold on the walls and the Romans' greed.

Moreover, the hope of plunder induced many to go on, as having this opinion, that all the places within were full of money, and as seeing that all round about it was made of gold.<sup>2</sup>

However, there is no positive historical proof that this "gold theory" is true. No matter what case, the Lord's prophecy was fulfilled, for today there is not left "one stone upon another".

## The Coming of Christ in Relation to Israel (24:3-44)

3 And as he was sitting upon the mount of Olives the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what is the sign of thy coming and *the* completion of the age? v.3 Just as the glory cloud in Ezekiel departed from "the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city" (Eze 11:23), so the Lord takes that place of separation on the Mount of Olives. The disciples' interest in prophecy was excited by the Lord's prediction about the temple. They ask the Lord three questions:

1. **"When shall these things be?"** This refers to the destruction of the temple. When Luke reports the Olivet Discourse, he includes a significant section of our Lord's answer that addresses this question (Luke 21:12-24). But in Matthew, the Lord passes over this question completely. Surely, the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. was disastrous for the nation of Israel, but it is nothing compared to the end of the age.
2. **"What is the sign of thy coming?"** This refers to the appearing. This question is taken up by the Lord in His discourse, in the third group of signs; vv.29-44. He takes up His coming with respect to Israel first, then Christendom, then the Gentiles.
3. **"What is the sign of the end of the age?"** This refers to the fulfillment of all prophecy from the beginning of "this age", which Bible students sometimes call the "Mosaic" age. The completion of the age includes the seventieth week of Daniel, and the event surrounding the return of Christ, up until the establishment of the Millennial kingdom, which is "the age to come" ([read more...](#)). The Lord answers this question in the first two groups of "signs", vv.4-28.

Another thing we can take from this verse is that prophecy is best learned in the spirit of inquiry.

## Signs Pertaining to the Beginning of Sorrows (vv.4-14)

**The Disciples as the Remnant.** The Lord addresses the disciples in this section as faithful Jews. He speaks of future events, but there was no thought in their minds that a great span of time would pass before the events would be accomplished. The disciples occupy the place of the Jewish remnant, and the Lord's words to them are really to the remnant of a latter day. One of the things we will notice as we go through this first section (vv.3-44) is the Jewish character of the teaching. There are many things that indicate this is not referring to Christians in the church period; one example is v.20 where a reference is made to keeping the Sabbath.

### The Danger of Being Misled by False Christs (vv.4-5)

**4** And Jesus answering said to them, See that no one mislead you. **5** For many shall come in my name, saying, "I" am the Christ, and they shall mislead many. **vv.4-5** The first great danger for the Jewish remnant is spiritual seduction to follow false Christs. We never find a warning to Christians about being deceived by false Christs, because we have already received the true Christ. Israel rejected the true Christ, and that opened them up to the danger of receiving a false Christ, which Jesus warned of in John 5:43. It is not that these false-Christs will claim to be Jesus of Nazareth, but rather that they will claim to be the Messiah, as if Jesus wasn't. We Christians are warned to "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1-2), because the characteristic feature of Christianity is the presence of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 12:3-4). A true Christian, indwelt with the Spirit of God, will never fall for an imitation of Christ. But the remnant will be in danger of that. We know that early in the first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation there will be tremendous political changes, depicted under the first seal (Rev. 6:2) as rider on a white horse, accomplishing conquest through diplomacy. The danger is that of being misled.

### The Danger of Being Overwhelmed by the Judgments (vv.6-8)

**6** But ye will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that ye be not disturbed; for all *these things* must take place, but it is not yet the end. **7** For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. **8** But all these *are the* beginning of throes. **vv.6-8** The second danger that will face the remnant is that of being overwhelmed by the severity of the judgments falling

around them, to think that the end was come and the Messiah had forsaken them. They must be patient. Even the report and rumors of wars will be dreadful. Then the wars will actually come; nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom. This warfare corresponds to the rider of the red horse, under the 2nd seal of Rev. 6. The warfare will be followed by famines, which are the natural by-product of war. This famine corresponds to the rider of the black horse, under the 3rd seal of Rev. 6. The famine is followed by pestilence (a fatal epidemic disease), which again corresponds to the rider of the pale horse, under the 4th seal of Rev. 6. On top of these, there will be geological disturbances to compound the mayhem. But again the caution is that this is only the *"beginning of throes"*. This expression "the beginning of sorrows" is a technical term the refers to the first half of Daniel's seventieth week. [Read more...](#)

### **The Danger of Being Overcome by Persecution (vv.9-13)**

**9** Then shall they deliver you up to tribulation, and shall kill you; and ye will be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. **10** And then will many be offended, and will deliver one another up, and hate one another; **11** and many false prophets shall arise and shall mislead many; **12** and because lawlessness shall prevail, the love of the most shall grow cold; **13** but he that has endured to the end, "he" shall be saved. vv.9-13 The third great danger facing the remnant is that of being overcome by persecution. The faithful will be hunted, captured, tortured, and killed during the "beginning of sorrows". Evidently, the persecution will come from the False Church in the first 3 1/2 years of the tribulation (Rev. 17:6), then from Antichrist in the last 3 1/2 years (Rev. 13:15). These martyrs are seen "under the altar" in the fifth seal of Rev. 6, crying out for vengeance. They are "killed for the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 20:4). One of the most demoralizing aspects of this is the betrayal by fellow-countrymen; *"and will deliver one another up"*. We read something of this in Micah 7:5-6; "Trust ye not in a friend, etc." The pressure will be to apostatize from faith in God, to give allegiance the False Church or to Antichrist. Satan will raise up "false prophets" to give credence to the path of apostasy. The affections of "the many" (the apostate mass of the Jews) will grow cold toward the remnant. Perhaps they would tolerate their faithful witnessing for a time, but quickly their patience will run out. The danger is to give in, and give up faith in God. Those who *"endure [persecution] until the end"* will be saved from their persecutors by the judgment that falls at the end of the week. Note: those who use v.13 to support the false doctrine of [Conditional Security](#) are totally clueless about the prophetic nature of Matt. 24-25.

### **The Gospel of the Kingdom (v.14)**

**14** And these glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth, for

a witness to all the nations, and then shall come the end. **v.14** The “end” (i.e. the coming of the Lord) will not take place until the the gospel of the kingdom is preached over the “whole habitable earth”. Part of the Jewish remnant will be the ones who preach this gospel. First it will be preached to the nation of Israel (Psa. 95), then to the rest of the world (Psa. 96). The great commission given to the apostles (Matt. 28) will then be fulfilled by this remnant. The gospel of the kingdom is quite different than the “*gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24) which Christian evangelists preach. He calls it “this gospel”... i.e. the same gospel that John the Baptist, and Jesus preached in the first century. The gospel of the kingdom is very simple; the King is returning, repent from your sins and be ready to receive Him! The gospel of the grace of God goes far higher, preaching the assurance of sins forgiven, and a new standing for the believer “in Christ”, etc.

## Signs Pertaining to the Great Tribulation (vv.15-28)

### The Abomination of Desolation Set Up (v.15)

**15** When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which is spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in *what is a holy place*, (he that reads let him understand,) **v.15** There are two references in the book of Daniel to the “abomination of desolation”; one in Dan. 11:31, and the other in Dan. 12:11. The Lord here is quoting from Daniel 12, not Daniel 11 (see notes on Dan. 11:31). The expression in Dan. 11 is historical only, although a foreshadowing of what is still to come; but Daniel 12:11 is explicitly prophetic; “*and from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days*”. The abomination of desolation is some form of gross idolatry that will be set up in the reconstructed Temple in Jerusalem. The connected event (the sacrifice taken away) is mentioned in Dan. 9:27 as occurring “in the midst of the week”. The leader of the Roman empire will put a stop to Jewish worship. The Personal Beast will need to abolish Judaism (and Christianity) in order to set up his own religion. This may mean that the Beast will breach the terms of the covenant set up between Rome and Israel at the beginning of the week. We read of it again in Dan. 11:38 and Rev. 13:12-15 in terms of a new religion. Antichrist will foster, encourage, enforce, and direct the idolatrous worship of the Personal Beast. Antichrist will use his derived political authority to enforce his religious agenda. He will deceive the citizens of the empire to build an image, and then force all in the empire to worship the Personal Beast via the image. Those who refuse to take part in this idolatry will be persecuted or martyred. It could very well be that “the abomination of desolation” refers to the worship of this image. The last phrase of v.15, “*he that reads let him understand*” is important. For one, it shows that the subject may be easily misunderstood. Also, it is a key

of vast importance to those who live in the days which the prophecies speak of. We get similar expressions often in prophecy, “he that hath an ear let him hear, etc.” The setting up of the abomination marks the middle of the seventieth week, the beginning of the Great Tribulation, and a datum from which other events are measured (e.g. 1260, 1290, 1335 days; see notes on [extensions to the 70th week](#)).

## Physical Persecution (vv.16-22)

**16** then let those who are in Judaea flee to the mountains; **17** let not him that is on the house come down to take the things out of his house; **18** and let not him that is in the field turn back to take his garment. **vv.16-18** When the idol is set up in Antichrist’s temple, this will be a warning to Israel to abandon human protection and turn to the Lord. To some degree, the remnant will have knowledge of these scriptures, perhaps some with more light than others; i.e. the the Maschilim, a special class of teachers, referred to in the Psalms, and in Dan. 11:33; 12:3). The remnant will obey this command, but the apostate nation will not heed the warning. As a result of them trusting in the covenant (“the protection of abominations”) in spite of this clear sign of Rome’s true character, God will send the instrument of His judgment on Israel toward the end of the week, called “a desolator” (the King of the North). The urgency is stressed in this verse. They should not waste any precious moments, because the persecution is going to quickly increase shortly thereafter. The majority of the Jewish remnant will flee to the mountains across the Jordan in the middle of the week at the Lord’s direction. They will be sheltered by faithful ones from the neighboring countries; e.g. Moab (Isa. 16:3-4). Others of the remnant will remain in the land as faithful witnesses for God against the evil reign of Antichrist (Rev. 11:1-14). [Read more...](#)

**19** But woe to those that are with child, and those that give suck in those days. **20** But pray that your flight may not be in winter time nor on sabbath: **vv.19-20** In terms of fleeing to the mountains, pregnant mothers and those with young children will be at a great disadvantage. They will literally have to run as fast as they can. Winter weather also could slow them down, and allow the agents of Antichrist to catch them. They should pray that their flight would not be on the Sabbath day, because these are Jews, still under the law. The Lord is stressing their responsibility to leave Judaism behind, and to run for safety. At the same time we see His tender care for them. If they did pray about these practical considerations, certainly He would answer their prayers! We see God’s sovereignty in Rev. 12 where there are given unto the woman (Israel) “two wings of a great eagle”, which represent providential help from God (rapid motion and guaranteed protection). Furthermore, the “earth helped the woman”... God will undertake for these ones who are fleeing in obedience to the Lord’s word.

**21** for then shall there be great tribulation, such as has not been from *the* beginning of *the* world until now, nor ever shall be; **22** and if those days had not been cut short, no flesh had been saved; but on account of the elect those days shall be cut short. **vv.21-22** The "[Great Tribulation](#)" is the last 3 1/2 years of Daniel's seventieth week (Rev. 7:14). What makes it "great" is the intense persecution of the faithful at the hands of Antichrist and the apostate Jews. This time period is also called "the time of Jacob's Trouble" (Jer. 30:7). The tribulation that that remnant will pass through is unlike anything saints have experienced "from *the* beginning of *the* world until now, nor ever shall be". The pressure to cave in will be extreme. If God had let the full 3 1/2 years (1278 days) unfold, no flesh would be saved (preserved from physical or moral death). In His mercy, the Lord will "cut short" the days so that the elect might be spared. Technically, the "great tribulation" for Israel will be brought to an end at 1260 days when the King of the North sweeps down through Israel and slaughters the apostate Jews. How much were the days "shortened"? By eighteen days. That's how close the agents of Antichrist will be to finding the hideout of the remnant!

### **Spiritual Seduction (vv.23-26)**

**23** Then if any one say to you, Behold, here is the Christ, or here, believe *it* not. **24** For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. **25** Behold, I have told you beforehand. **26** If therefore they say to you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, *he is* in the inner chambers, do not believe *it*. **vv.23-26** Even in the mountains, the remnant will not be beyond danger. Satan will raise up false Christs to lead away some of the remnant to be captured by the apostate Jews. He will raise up false prophets that will claim that the Lord had appeared in this or that place; in the "desert" (Zech. 14), or in the "inner chambers" (Ezek. 43:7). Some who are not real among the remnant will follow them, seeking a deliverance without repentance and obedience to the Word of God. The Word of the Lord is "do not believe it". The true manner of Christ's coming is disclosed in v.27. But these deceptions will be so very clever, that "even the elect" might be deceived, if it were possible. But thank God, it is not possible!

### **The Unmistakable Manner of the Coming of Christ (vv.27-28)**

**27** For as the lightning goes forth from the east and shines to the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. **v.27 The Publicity of His Coming.** When the Lord does come, it will be obvious to all. You cannot mistake the flash of lightning. Notice too that it comes from the east and goes to the west! It will be sudden, swift, surprising, and maximally public. There is no trail of symbols or clues, no mystic riddles, no obscurity about it



whatsoever (c.p. v.26). The word to the remnant is: when it happens, you will know it.

**The Son of Man.** “Son of man” is the Lord’s title in both suffering and coming glory (Heb. 2:6-8; 1 Cor. 15:27). When Jesus was rejected as the Messiah, He then takes up the title “Son of man”, which is broader than “Son of David”, no longer restricted to Israel. Whenever we read of the Son of man’s kingdom (Matt. 13), it refers to the earthly side of the Millennial kingdom. Whenever we read of the coming of the Son of man, it is always the appearing of Christ, when He will return to this earth and be vindicated in the place He was once rejected.

**28** For wherever the carcass is, there will be gathered the eagles. **v.28 The Precision of His Coming.** The Lord will appear with the precision of eagles (vultures) who gather together over a carcass. Vultures don’t gather for some miscellaneous reason. They gather because there is a carcass to devour (Job 39:30). The carcass here is a type of man in the flesh; the coming of the Son of man will be in judgment on evil, not “meek and lowly” as at His first coming. Israel ought to have been a living witness for God in this earth, but they have manifested nothing but spiritual death. When Christ appears, He will bring a final end to all the dead profession. The vultures might speak of the various armies and confederacies of men that the Lord will use to accomplish His judgments in [the indignation](#).

## Signs Pertaining to the Appearing of Christ (vv.29-44)

### Moral and Spiritual Darkness (v.29)

**29** But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. **v.29** The expression “*immediately after the tribulation*” is a solid defense against preterism. The appearing of Christ (v.30) “immediately” follows the great tribulation. Those who believe that the prophetic week (the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments) was fulfilled in 70 A.D. certainly cannot prove that the Son of man came at that point. Here in v.29 we read of the great moral and spiritual darkness that will accompany the appearing of Christ, depicted in poetic symbolism. Supreme governing authority (the sun; Gen. 37:9), authority whose power is derived from the supreme authority (the moon), and lesser authorities (the stars) will cease to give moral light, will apostatize from their God-given place, and become covered with moral death. The powers of the heavens, a summary statement taking in all governmental and religious authority, will be shaken.

## Public Manifestation of the Son of Man (v.30)

**30** And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. **v.30** Just before the Lord appears, something called “*the sign of the Son of Man*” will appear in the sky. We do not know what it is. Perhaps it is the brightness of His official glories reflected in the atmosphere. William Kelly suggests that it is a view of the Son of man Himself in heaven shortly before He appears. I have connected it with Rev. 10:7-8, which says that “the Mystery of God will be ended” - the Mystery of why evil is allowed to go on “seemingly unchecked” in the earth. It says that in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, this mystery will be ended. I have wondered if this sign in the heavens, which may last for several days, will somehow signal to the world that the rightful judgment of evil is near at hand. The “tribes of the land” (apostate Israel) will lament when they see this sign, because they know their judgment is near. Perhaps the mourning of the faithful remnant in repentance (Zech. 12:10-14) is included in this “mourning”, but I tend to think that does not fit with the context. One is the work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the remnant, for the other it is a mourning in frustration, anger, and resentment. Then they will see the Son of man coming in all His official splendor (Rev. 19:11-16).

## The Restoration of the Nation of Israel (v.31)

**31** And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from *the one* extremity of *the* heavens to *the other* extremity of them. **v.31** After the Son of man appears, the restoration of the nation of Israel will begin. It will occur in two phases: first, the restoration of the two tribes who are guilty of breaking the law and crucifying the Messiah (hinted at in v.30), and second, the restoration of the ten tribes, who are guilty only of breaking the law. It will be a mighty work of God to bring the ten tribes home (Isa. 27:13). Where will the ten tribes return from? The ten tribes will return from all over the world; i.e. the “*four winds*” (Zech. 2:6). It will be a great miracle all in itself. Some will come from as far as China! This is the prophetic fulfillment of “The Feast of Trumpets” (Lev. 23:24-25). [Read more...](#)

## The Parable of the Fig Tree: Return of the Jews (vv.32-35)

**32** But learn the parable from the fig-tree: When already its branch becomes tender and produces leaves, ye know that the summer is near. **33** Thus also “ye”, when ye see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors. **vv.32-33** The fig tree is always a symbol of the nation of Israel in scripture; see Luke 13:6-9; Matt. 21:17-20; Matt. 24:32-33. In most

Mediterranean fig trees the fruit appears before the leaves. In Matt. 21, the Lord found nothing but leaves (a profession of life, Gen. 3:7), but no fruit (reality). True restoration for Israel will come through repentance. Leaf-production in the fig tree is a picture of a revival in Jewish nationality. We are seeing this today. Really, there has been a revival in this way ever since the end of World War II, but it will fully happen when the Jews return in vast numbers near the beginning of the Tribulation period (Isa. 18:1-4). In Luke 21 the Lord adds "the fig tree *and all the trees*". Not only Israel, but many of the ancient countries in prophecy will re-emerge, and be in position to fulfill their role at the expiration of this age. The "*summer*" speaks of a new age of peace and joy for Israel under the reign of Messiah. But before "that age" can come, there must be "*the end of this age*".

### **Added Detail: The Sureness of these Things (vv.34-35)**

**34** Verily I say to you, This generation will not have passed away until all these things shall have taken place. **35** The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall in no wise pass away. **vv.34-35** "Verily"... the Lord now states the sureness of these things. Preterists will heavily rely on this v.34 to support their view of prophecy. As we have already demonstrated, "[this generation](#)" refers to a moral class of individuals among the nation of Israel; those who have been the rejecters of God's testimony throughout the nation's history. The Lord is not giving us the timing of His coming (see v.36), but the sureness of it; i.e. the apostate Jews will not escape the judgment, nor will they perish in some benign or accidental manner. They will meet their end in the direct judgments of God. The words of Christ, and all the Word, is more sure than "*heaven and earth*", which will one day pass away. Liberals, listen up!

### **Added Detail: The Specific Time of the Appearing Unknown (vv.36-39)**

**36** But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, but *my* Father alone. **v.36** The coming of Christ will be totally unexpected... not one man or angel knows the timing of it. This verse is often quoted to support the fact that we cannot predict the timing of the rapture; however, it actually refers to the appearing! But in ch.25, v.13 a similar expression is repeated, and there it refers to the rapture. Only the Father knows the time when the appearing will take place. In Mark 13:32 we find that even the Son of man Himself (for He is a man) does not know the exact moment of the appearing! Now, of course, the Son of man is also the Son of God, and He never ceases to be omniscient. But it brings out Christ's perfection as man, in the place of a servant. When He entered heaven, the work of the cross complete, the Father then said to Him, the first glorified Man in heaven, "*Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?*" (Psa. 110:1). From that moment on, He has waited patiently ("*expectantly*") until the moment comes for His

exaltation!

**37** But as the days of Noe, so also shall be the coming of the Son of man. **38** For as they were in the days which were before the flood, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day on which Noe entered into the ark, **39** and they knew not till the flood came and took all away; thus also shall be the coming of the Son of man. **vv.37-39** The coming of the Son of man (the appearing) will be similar to the judgment that fell in the days of Noah. Even though there had been a clear testimony through the righteous preaching of Noah (2 Pet. 2:5), and even earlier through the testimony of Enoch (Heb. 11:5), yet the world continued its course of self-will and independence of God right up until the flood came. We know from Genesis that violence and corruption had filled the earth, but here no immorality is mentioned. The idea here is that they carried on with natural things in independence of God. The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom will save some, but it will not reform the world. The world will continue on, “headlong” into judgment. On the other hand, the remnant, like Noah and his family, will be sheltered from the coming judgment. This is a contrast to the Church, who, like Enoch of old, will be taken out of the world before the judgment falls. This connection between the remnant and Noah is another confirmation that the Church will not be on earth at this time.

### **Added Detail: The Harvest Judgment (vv.40-41)**

**40** Then two shall be in the field, one is taken and one is left; **41** two *women* grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left. **vv.40-41** The Lord then explains something that will happen “then”; i.e. immediately following His appearing. At the time of the appearing, the angels will go forth over the western earth and “reap” those who have refused the gospel of the kingdom. This is called the harvest judgment. The harvest judgment is a discriminating judgment, pictured in Matt. 13 by the harvestmen (angels) removing the tares from the field. We get this discriminating character of judgment in these words; “*One shall be taken [for judgment] and the other left [for blessing].*” Sometimes this scripture is confused with the rapture, when one shall be taken for blessing, and the other left for judgment. But clearly, from the context (v.39), those “taken away” are destined for judgment, just like those swept away in the flood. It is a discriminating judgment because only the false professors will be “taken” by the angels. Those taken will be cast directly into the lake of fire (Matt. 13:14). They will not appear at the great white throne judgment with the wicked dead. No one will be able to hide; whether in “the field” (the commercial sphere) or at “the mill” (the home sphere), the judgment will take them. The harvest will take place between 1278 days and 1290 days measured from the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week. [Read more...](#) This could not refer to the slaughter of the Jews in 70 A.D., because that was an

indiscriminating judgment.

### **The Importance of Watching for His Coming (vv.42-44)**

**42** Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour your Lord comes. **v.42** These verses form a transitional section, which speak generally of the need for watchfulness with regard to the Lord's coming. In this sense, it applies to all believers, whether Jew, Gentile, or Church of God, because it is "*your Lord*". However, we can see from v.44 that it really does pertain to the appearing, not the rapture, because it is the coming of "*the Son of man*". The point is this, live your life in the awareness that Christ's coming is imminent. The Lord develops this point in v.43 with an illustration of the appearing of Christ in relation to unbelievers.

**43** But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched and not have suffered his house to be dug through *into*. **v.43** The Lord next presents the folly of unbelief in relation to His coming. The fact of the Lord's coming "as a thief" is mentioned five times in scripture, and it always refers to the appearing (Matt. 24:43; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 16:15). The idea of coming as a thief involves unwanted surprise. The Lord will not come for His saints as a thief, but rather as a bridegroom. The unbeliever is pictured as a master or steward in charge of a house. A thief was able to break into the house unnoticed because the master of the house was taken by surprise. It was a lack of watchfulness which led to the loss. In the same way, the world will come under judgment as a result of a careless attitude.

**44** Wherefore "ye" also, be ye ready, for in that hour that ye think not the Son of man comes. **v.44** A true believer will never come into condemnation, much less come into condemnation as a result of carelessness that might creep into their life after salvation. This is a warning to the faithful remnant of the Jews. The same character (carelessness) that will result in the destruction of the wicked can also get a believer off the path. Therefore, seeing the end of a careless walk for unbelievers will motivate the believer to be ever "ready" for the coming of the Lord.

## **The Coming of Christ in Relation to the**

## Christian World (24:45 - 25:30)

**Three Christian Parables** in this section bring out the Christian's responsibility in light of Christ's return. One marked difference in this section is the absence of the term "the coming of the Son of man", which refers to the appearing. Now, the appearing is referred to in this section (Matt. 24:50; 25:26-30), but it is not called the coming of the Son of man. Moreover, the coming of Christ for His saints (the Rapture) is mentioned in all three parables (Matt. 24:46; 25:10; 25:19), compared to the other two sections where the Rapture never comes in. This is significant, because the Rapture is specifically a Christian doctrine, unknown in Old Testament prophecy. Absent from this section are predictions of signs (c.p. vv.6-8), references to Old Testament prophecy (c.p. v.15), references to Jerusalem and the Jewish temple (c.p. v.15), references to the Sabbath (c.p. v.20), and even references to false Christs (c.p. v.24). These three parables emphasize three characteristics that should be found in the disciples during the time of Christ's absence:

1. The Parable of the Two Stewards (24:45-51) emphasizes the need for *Faithfulness*
2. The Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1-13) emphasizes the need for *Watchfulness*
3. The Parable of the Talents (25:14-30) emphasizes the need for *Usefulness*

**A Parenthesis.** These three parables form a *parenthesis* in the chronological progression of events in Matt. 24:4-44, which resumes in v.31 of ch.25 with the judgment of the living Gentiles in the Millennium. This concept of a "parenthesis" is consistent with the methods used by the Spirit of God in other prophecies, where it is needful to have certain truths out of chronological order for moral reasons. Those other points are placed in parentheses and inserted in the chronological sequence... but there are always "tags" that indicate to us the asynchronous nature of the parenthesis.

### The Parable of the Two Servants: Faithfulness (24:45-51)

**Two Kinds of Servants.** This parable ([compare](#)) describes exactly the mixture we see around us in Christendom today. In the house of God there are vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor, the real and the false, the faithful and the evil. It is remarkable that the coming of Christ in relation to the faithful steward is the *rapture*, but to the evil steward it is the *appearing* that surprises him.

**45** Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord has set over his household,

to give them food in season? **46** Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus. **47** Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all his substance. **vv.45-47**

**The Faithful and Prudent Servant.** The “faithful and prudent” servants are those of genuine faith, who God has set in a position of responsibility in the house of God. This broadly refers to the sphere of Christian ministry; feeding the people of God. There are two things we need to do: (1) to provide food, and (2) to give it in season. We must be busy reading the Word of God to provide food, and we must be walking in communion (constant prayer) in order to know when to give it. It is God’s desire that we would be found “*doing thus*” when the Lord comes, which means we are to live our life every day in the any-moment expectation of the Lord’s coming. Then, in v.47, we have the reward given to the faithful servant. His lord would “*set him over all his substance*”, which pictures what Christ will do for his faithful disciples at the appearing! A small responsibility has been committed to us now, but if we are faithful with it, we will share in the Millennial reign of Christ, co-administering His inheritance.

**48** But if that evil bondman should say in his heart, My lord delays to come, **49** and begin to beat his fellow-bondmen, and eat and drink with the drunken; **50** the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he does not expect it, and in an hour he knows not of, **51** and shall cut him in two and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. **vv.48-51**

**The Evil Servant.** The evil servants are those without faith, and without divine life; but here they are characterized as those who deny the *nearness* of the Lord’s coming. When the Christian’s proper hope is given up, then moral declension sets in. The moral declension manifests itself under two heads: mistreatment of true believers (“*beat his fellow-servants*”), and fellowship with the world (“*to eat and drink with the drunken*”). Not only is this pattern true of individuals, but of the Christian testimony as a whole, of which true believers are a part. As we will see further developed in the Parable of the Virgins, when the Church lost the hope of the Lord’s coming it descended into moral gloom in the dark ages, living licentiously and even persecuting the faithful. The evil servant would be surprised by his lord’s return, just like the false professors in Christendom will be surprised at the appearing, when the Lord comes “as a thief in the night”. Their judgment will be swift and severe; they are tortured with gruesome pain (“*cut in two*”), and cast into eternal judgment where there is “*weeping and the gnashing of teeth*”. The lesson is this: those who live under the lordship of Christ will be appointed a place with Christ in His kingdom, and those who live as lord of their own lives will be appointed a place with the hypocrites. Which way do you want to live?

## The Parable of the Ten Virgins: Watchfulness (25:1-13)

**The Ten Virgins.** This is the *tenth* of the [ten similitudes of the kingdom of heaven](#), which describe this time when Jesus is rejected. Why does the Lord give this as a similitude of the kingdom of heaven? He is teaching that when the whole profession of Christianity fell into a spiritual slumber, the restoration of the hope of Christ's coming is what would revive the Church. It gives a sketch of Church History in four distinct stages. The central message is that the servants of the Kingdom are to *be watching for the Lord's return*.

### 1st Stage: Travelling - The Position of the Early Kingdom (vv.1-4)

#### CHAPTER 25

¶ Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins that having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom. v.1 The other nine similitudes of the kingdom begin with "the kingdom of heaven is like" or "has become like". They all speak of the general state of the kingdom without reference to a specific point in time, although certain aspects we can see came in at certain points in time; e.g. the growth of the mustard tree during the era of Constantine. This last similitude gives us what the kingdom "shall be"... a state that it would enter into through a progress of time. The first stage is described in v.1. These young women were "virgins" which speaks of the kingdom's beginning in separation and devotion to Christ. There were "ten" virgins because it is not the body of Christ in view, but man's responsibility. The "torches" speak of the outward light of profession; reality is not necessarily implied. They began by "going forth" from their previous connections to Judaism or Paganism "to meet the bridegroom", answering to their calling to wait for God's Son to return from heaven; e.g. the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:9-10). The stronger our hope is for the Lord's coming, the more separated we will be as we walk through this world.

2 And five of them were prudent and five foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their torches and did not take oil with them; 4 but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches. vv.2-4 While the early Church began well outwardly, they were not all right inwardly. A significant portion ("five") were foolish because they had the lamp of profession but no oil. Oil in scripture is a type of the Holy Ghost (Zech. 4:1-6), which even the youngest child of God possesses; "an unction from the Holy One" (1 John 2:20). The oil is contained in "vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7), just as the Holy Ghost indwells the physical bodies of believers (1 Cor. 6:19). It is the possession of the Holy Spirit that makes a person fit for the Lord's presence (v.12), because the Spirit is the living link between the believer and Christ; "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). Note: some have tried to force this parable to mean that the "foolish" are Christians who are not looking for Christ to come; i.e.



that backslidden Christians will be excluded at the rapture. This is totally false. The “wise” have the Spirit of God, and thus are real. The “foolish” are not sealed with the Spirit, and are merely false professors. This is evident in v.4 when “all [wise and foolish] *slumbered*” and in v.12 when the Lord says to the foolish only “I do not know you”.

## **2nd Stage: *Slumbering* - The Kingdom in the Dark Ages (v.5)**

**5** Now the bridegroom tarrying, they all grew heavy and slept. v.5 As the centuries wore on, Christendom sunk down into a condition of spiritual slumber. Notice that “they all” grew heavy and slept. As a whole, the profession of Christianity grew earthly, sunk down to the level of the world, and ceased to look for and expect the return of the Savior.

## **3rd Stage: *Awakening* - The Recovery of the Truth (vv.6-9)**

**6** But in *the middle of the night* there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him. v.6 Just when things were at their darkest point (the “middle of the night”), the Spirit of God began to work in grace. It was at the close of the Thyatira period (early 1500’s) when the Reformation dawned. But as wonderful as that recovery was, it failed to rise up to what we see in the Philadelphia movement (early 1800’s). The reformers (Luther, Zwingli, etc.) were used to recover salvation by faith and the authority of the scriptures, but they never understood dispensational truth, Church truth, or prophetic truth; and they never saw the imminent return of Christ for His Church. It wasn’t until the late 1820’s that the Spirit of God began working through various individuals and aroused the hearts of God’s people to hold afresh the hope of Christ’s return. Beginning with J.N. Darby and other brethren, the so-called “midnight cry” was sounded out across Europe, North America, and the world. Notice that the cry is really “Behold the bridegroom”, the word “cometh” was inserted by the translators. It is not so much the event that was before the hearts of the brethren, but the Person of Christ, and the hope of being with Him. “Go ye out to meet Him” is the same calling given to the early Christian testimony (v.1). This was a returning to first principles. The recovery of the truth was the completion of the work started in the reformation! Note that the virgins never sleep again, which might indicate that the hope of the Lord’s coming will never again be lost completely to the Church.

**7** Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their torches. v.7 The effect of the recovered truth affected “all those virgins”. It was a general movement in Christendom, affecting even those who did not have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. We saw this from 1850 - 1950 with the revival of Christian fundamentalism. The Christian testimony “arose” from that state of spiritual slumber; from allegorical hermeneutics, from errant bibology, from post-millennial or amillennial eschatology. Also, the idea of self-judgment is pictured by “trimming their

torches” which is the action of removing the burned wick to allow the flame to burn brighter! In general, the heightened interest in Bible prophecy (e.g. Niagara Bible Conferences, etc.) produced a Godly improvement in the moral conduct of Christians.

**8** *And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our torches are going out.* v.8 A striking thing that became evident at this time was the need on the part of some for oil. One of the great truths recovered in the mid-1800s was the presence and power of the Spirit of God on earth. How solemn! Some of them had an outward testimony with no inward reality. The foolish virgins did not even have the discernment to know where to obtain it, and yet their need was apparent. They had been running on the temporary energy of the flesh... but there was no indwelling Spirit of God to sustain the activity. Perhaps this fleshly desire for the Spirit without reality is what gave rise to the charismatic movement?

**9** *But the prudent answered saying, We cannot, lest it might not suffice for us and for you. Go rather to those that sell, and buy for yourselves.* v.9 They must learn the hard way that a person cannot get the Spirit from another, a child of God. We can share the gospel with unbelievers, but we cannot share our salvation. The only source from which the Spirit may be obtained is from “those that sell”. Who else could that be but the Father and the Son? This in no way indicates that the gift of the Spirit can be purchased with money (Acts 8:20; Isa. 55:1). Rather, it indicates that the soul must have a personal transaction with God; “buy for yourselves”. Perhaps the five foolish had not been willing to pay the price earlier (reproach, persecution, etc.), or perhaps they wanted nothing to do with God on a personal level. In any case, the five wise virgins give accurate instructions to the five foolish. This speaks of a revival of a clear gospel message during this stage!

#### **4th Stage: *Testing* - The Coming of Christ (vv.10-13)**

**10** *But as they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and the ones that were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut.* v.10 At last, the bridegroom comes! This is the rapture (same as the other two parables in this section). It happened while the five foolish “went to buy”. They had given mental assent to their need of oil and even the proper source; but they were too late. How solemn! They were not ready. But those that “were ready” went in to the wedding feast; a picture of the believer being ushered into the joys of heaven. How do you get ready? Buy oil; i.e. have that personal transaction with God – get real with Him – before it is too late. After the rapture, metaphorically the door of mercy will be “shut”. This goes along with 2 Thess. 2:12 to show that there is no second chance for those who reject the gospel in the present dispensation.

**11** Afterwards come also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; **12** but he answering said, Verily I say unto you, I do not know you. vv.11-12 Vainly, the five foolish virgins seek entrance to heaven. The twice repetition “Lord, Lord” denotes emphatic profession; but the attempt is futile. Perhaps this is metaphoric description of a painful scene at the great white throne when the possession of an outward testimony may be pleaded before the Judge, but His response unveils that vital error: neglect to establish that personal knowledge of Christ (Matt. 7:23).

### **Application to the Disciples of the Kingdom (v.13)**

**13** Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour. **v.13** The words “wherein the Son of Man cometh” are not in the original manuscripts. The coming of the Son of Man always refers to the Appearing, but this verse (and the whole parable) refers to the Rapture. The exhortation for us is to live expectantly, to live watchfully, waiting for the Lord to come. If we live that way, it will have a Godly practical effect on our lives. This statement would also expose the folly of “date-setting”, of predicting the date of the rapture. God hasn’t given us a date because He wants us to be ready at any moment. Tremendous damage has been done by men such as Harold Camping... damage to individuals who have their hopes disappointed, and damage to the testimony of Christ when predicted rapture dates are “missed” and Christianity becomes a subject of mockery.

**The Bridegroom in the Gospels.** The Lord Jesus is presented as the bridegroom of earthly Israel in every case except one (Matt. 25) where the context is the Kingdom in Mystery... and even there, notice that the Bride isn’t mentioned. We need to remember that the mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25) had not been revealed yet.

1. **The Sons of the bridechamber** (Matt. 9:15, Mark 2:19-20, Luke 5:34-35). In this case Christ is the bridegroom of Israel, and the sons of the bridechamber are the faithful remnant.
2. **The Ten Virgins** (Matt. 25:1-10). In this case Christ is the bridegroom of the Church, but the bride isn’t mentioned. Instead, the ten virgins are a picture of the Christian testimony through the ages. See also Matt. 22:1-14.
3. **The marriage of Cana** (John 2:9). This is a Millennial picture, and Christ is the bridegroom of restored Israel. The bride isn’t even mentioned.
4. **The friend of the bridegroom** (John 3:29). Christ is the bridegroom of Israel, and the faithful remnant is the bride.

**Misunderstandings About The Ten Virgins.** There is an erroneous interpretation of this parable circulating today. Some view the ten virgins as a parabolic picture of those in the

tribulation period who are invited to the millennial kingdom, via the gospel of the kingdom. They view the “marriage” as what will have already occurred in heaven, while the wedding banquet or “feast” represents the entire 1,000 year reign of Christ. Those prepared with oil are those who hear the gospel and are looking for Him, and they enter into the Kingdom. Those without oil do not. They view this parable relating more to the sheep and the goats of ch.25 than with the wheat and tares of ch.13. There are at least three reasons why this interpretation cannot be correct. (1) None of the [similitudes of the kingdom](#) focus primarily on the tribulation period, but rather on the kingdom of heaven in its “mystery” phase, which is going on now; i.e. the Church period, generally. Why should this similitude be different? (2) Furthermore, it is the Church that is put in anticipation of the Bridegroom, not the Jews. (3) Finally, the Spirit of God will leave this earth at the rapture (Rev. 22:17), and will not indwell believers in the tribulation period as He does today. The possession of “oil” represents the indwelling of the Spirit of God, which distinctly pertains to Christianity, not the remnant of Jews in the tribulation.

## The Parable of the Talents: Usefulness (25:14-30)

**The Parable of the Talents vs. Parable of the Pounds.** In Matt. 25 we have the Parable of the Talents. There, three servants are given differing amounts of money (one, two, and five talents), and the two useful servants gain their lord a 100% return-on-investment, and both are given the same reward. This is like several believers who are given a different amount of resources to use for the Lord. Each has a *different amount of responsibility*. Both are given *the same reward*, because it isn't how much we are given, but what we do with those resources that matters. In Luke 19 we have the Parable of the Pounds. There three servants are given the *same amount of responsibility* (one pound). The two useful servants gain their lord different rates of return; 1000% and 500%. Notice that *the rewards are different*; ten cities and five cities. The principles are clear; it isn't the amount of gift or resources that we have been given, but the way we use them for the Lord that matters. See notes on [spiritual gifts](#); although this passage does not refer strictly to gifts, but to spiritual resources in general. Natural gift goes hand-in-glove with spiritual gift under the power of the Spirit of God. (Note: the unprofitable servant pictures an unbeliever.)

## The Christian's Responsibility in Christ's Absence (vv.14-15)

¶ **14** For *it is* as if a man going away out of a country called his own bondmen and delivered to them his substance. **v.14** This parable is not a [similitude](#) of the kingdom of heaven, but it does have to do with the kingdom. It reads, “*for it is as...*”, not “*the kingdom of heaven is like unto...*” as with all the similitudes. What is the “it”? You might argue that the “it” is the

kingdom, but on closer study, we see that the “it” refers to *the return of Christ*, which is the subject of v.13. The Lord’s return has the character of one who will require an accounting for what was done in his absence. The parable is clear. Before a man travels abroad, he commits his substance to his servants. In the same way, Christ is now in heaven, having been rejected on earth. His substance has been placed into the hands of professing Christians; the subjects of the kingdom of heaven.

**15** And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to each according to his particular ability, and immediately went away out of the country. **v.15** The substance is not equally distributed among the servants, but some are given more than others; whether five, two, or only one talent. The same is true in Christianity. The Lord has given each believer a different amount of resources to use for the Lord, and therefore each has a different amount of responsibility. What are these resources? They would seem to be primarily spiritual endowments, although not limited to gifts. It would include all that we have received from the Lord as a spiritual advantage in contrast to non-Christians; we have access to the Word of God, exposure to sound teaching, special gifts, etc. These resources are distributed to each “*according to his particular ability*”. The “*abilities*” here would seem to be more natural abilities, compared to spiritual resources pictured by the “*talents*”. The Lord has not given us more responsibility in spiritual things than He has given us ability to handle. He won’t expect us to haul eight tons with a 280-horsepower engine. Now, we cannot equate spiritual gifts and natural abilities. Otherwise, they wouldn’t really be special, since they would be within the range of the natural man’s ability. The point is this; a man has a certain natural aptitude from God first, then he is given a spiritual gift upon conversion that he never had before, and then he is responsible not to neglect it (1 Tim. 4:14), but rather stir it up (2 Tim. 1:6) or else it will become weakened, but never lost (Rom. 11:29). This is not an exhortation to use our *natural* ability to the maximum extent in the *natural* sphere; e.g. football, banking, politics, etc. It is an exhortation to use our *spiritual* abilities to the maximum extent in the *spiritual* sphere, to further God’s dispensation, remembering that we have sufficient natural ability to meet all our responsibilities in dependence on the Lord.

### **The Difference between Usefulness and Wastefulness (vv.16-18)**

**16** And he that had received the five talents went and trafficked with them, and made five other talents. **17** In like manner also he that *had received* the two, *he also* gained two others. **vv.16-17** The two useful servants “*went out and trafficked*” with their talents, which speaks of going out in service. They knew the heart of their master, that he desired profit, and would look for it upon his return. Just so, the useful servant of Christ will take the

spiritual endowments and use them in service for Christ while He is absent. As gift is exercised, it will grow in strength and even become more fine-tuned. The cultivation of gift is pictured by the multiplication of talents in the parable. No one will be given another gift that is different from their current gift. Rather, the current gift(s) can be further developed.

**18** But he that had received the one went and dug in the earth, and hid the money of his lord. **v.18** The unprofitable servant decided to hide the talent he had received in the ground. He didn't go out and spend it on himself. His mistake was that he did *nothing* with it. He had a false notion when he hid the money, that it was better off preserved in a hiding place than being trafficked in the markets. Conservatism is the wrong model in Christian service. It is interesting where he hid the money... in the earth. It is striking today that many of the Lord's servants are burying their spiritual resources in the things of this life. It isn't even the pleasures of sin, just the earth. How easy it is to get taken up with education, occupation, entertainment, family life, hobbies, or other interests rather than using the gifts and other spiritual resources that we have been given for the Lord. And that is what it means to "*hide*" our talent in the earth.

### **The Day of Review and Reward (vv.19-30)**

**19** And after a long time the lord of those bondmen comes and reckons with them. **v.19** The expression "*after a long time*" speaks of the period between the ascension and the return of Christ; i.e. the Church period. This is the closest thing in scripture to indicate any length of time before the Lord's coming, and even here the master returns within the lifetime of the servants, which would not suggest a period of 2000 years, although we can see it in hindsight. The Spirit is always careful to maintain the believer's hope of the imminent return of Christ. The point here is that the Lord will return eventually, and when He does, He will "*reckon*" with us concerning those things He has given to us in responsibility.

**20** And he that had received the five talents came to *him* and brought five other talents, saying, *My lord, thou deliveredst me five talents; behold, I have gained five other talents besides them.* **21** His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy lord. **22** And he also that had received the two talents came to *him* and said, *My lord, thou deliveredst me two talents; behold, I have gained two other talents besides them.* **23** His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. **vv.20-23** The first two servants present their talents to their master. They had used their talents for the interests of their master, and he calls them "*good and faithful servants*". They had confidence in the heart of their

master, and it was rewarded upon his return. For the believer, the review of our handling of our Master's goods will take place at the [judgment seat of Christ](#). There are two aspects to the reward; (1) being set over many things in the kingdom, and (2) sharing in the joy of our Lord. Each had a different amount of responsibility, but both are given the same reward; *"thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things"*. It isn't how much we are given, but what we do with those resources that matters. They are told *"Enter into the joy of thy lord"*. Confidence in the heart of our Master will be rewarded with the enjoyment of Christ's own joy; for He will joy to see the travail of His soul. His joy will be ours!

**24** And he also that had received the one talent coming to *him* said, *My lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sowed, and gathering from where thou hadst not scattered, 25* and being afraid I went away and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, thou hast that which is thine. **vv.24-25** The secret of the third servant's slothfulness is revealed. He had evil thoughts about his master; *"I knew thee that thou art a hard man, etc."* He thought the master was austere and exacting, that if he had tried to earn more money it would not meet the master's expectations. He thought he knew the master's heart, but he didn't. It produced fear in the wicked servant's heart, and that fear caused him to hide the talent in the earth. It was a very impudent tone that the wasteful servant used when he said; *"behold, thou hast that which is thine"*. He would rather do *nothing* with the master's money. Without faith, man's mind forms a false impression of God. Although God is love, man can even begin to treat God as an enemy (Col. 1:21).

**26** And his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I had not sowed, and gather from where I had not scattered; **27** thou oughtest then to have put my money to the money-changers, and when I came I should have got what is mine with interest. **vv.26-27** The master reveals the wicked heart of the third servant. He did not even act consistently with his own twisted thoughts. Why would the master give his servants money, unless he intended for them to earn more? If the only issue was a false impression of the master, the servant would have put the money into the bank, so that it would not only be safe, but it would earn interest. In the bank, it wouldn't earn 100% ROI, but it would at least earn something. If he really believed his master was a hard man, he would have been motivated to earn something out of fear. Why then did the wicked servant do *nothing*? Because there was positive hatred in his heart.

**28** Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him that has the ten talents: **29** for to every one that has shall be given, and he shall be in abundance; but from him that has not, that even which he has shall be taken from him. **30** And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. **vv.28-30** The

master pronounces the twofold judgment on the wicked and slothful servant: (1) his one talent would be given to another, and (2) he would be cast into outer darkness. What does this speak of? The wicked servant is a person who professes to know the Lord, and takes the name of Christian outwardly. They have *“one talent”*... certain Christian privileges by virtue of being in the testimony (Heb. 6:4-6). Those privileges will be stripped away from them in the day of judgment. What does it mean that they should *“give it to him that has the ten talents”*? The general principle is brought out in v.29. In the final analysis, God is not in the business of having “grey” results. Divine judgment is “black and white”. God will have *fullness* of joy for those who really know His Son, and *fullness* of despair for those who hate Him. The third servant is called previously *“wicked”* and *“slothful”*, but in the final analysis, he is called *“useless”*... how sad! The useless servant is cast into eternal punishment; described here as *“outer darkness”* (separation from God), and where *“there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth”* (eternal torment).

## The Coming of Christ in Relation to the Gentiles (25:31-46)

**Sessional Judgment for the Gentiles.** During the 7-year tribulation, the gospel of the Kingdom will be carried to “all the nations” (Matt. 24:14; Isa. 66:19). Some will accept this gospel, others will reject it. Those who reject it will ignore the desperate need of the Jewish preachers, but the faithful will shelter and feed them. At this sessional judgment, the Gentiles will be separated into two groups, the sheep and the goats.

The Lord will reveal to all that their personal faith or unbelief was demonstrated by their treatment of the faithful Jewish remnant, whom he calls “My brethren”. The criteria by which the Gentiles will be separated is according to their treatment of the remnant. A great many will receive the gospel of the kingdom. We read of them in Rev. 7:9 as *“A great multitude which no man could number.”* They are the sheep. Others will reject the gospel and persecute the remnant. They are the goats. The sheep will enter the Kingdom, the goats will go to the lake of fire.

This is the sessional judgment *“of the quick”* — the living Gentiles at the *beginning* of the Millennium. There is another sessional judgment *“of the dead”* that will occur at the *end* of the Millennium, called the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11). See [judgment of the](#)



[quick and the dead](#). Down through the centuries these two events have been frequently confused. The believers who receive the gospel of the grace of God today will never stand before the sessional judgment of Christ; *"there is then now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1). There will be a judgment seat of Christ for the believer, but it has nothing to do with eternal salvation.

[Read more...](#)

**A Moral Order.** The Jews are more responsible than the Gentiles, and therefore the Lord's coming with respect to the Jews is given first in Matt. 24:3-44. However, the Gentiles are not exempt from the reign of Christ. The Father promised the Son *"I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession"* (Psa. 2:8). What will He do with the heathen? *"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel"* (Psa. 2:9). Judgment is in store for many of the Gentiles, but where faith is found, there will be blessing.

## The Sheep and the Goats: The Sessional Judgment (25:31-46)

¶ **31** But when the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory, **32** and all the nations shall be gathered before him; and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; **33** and he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left. **vv.31-33** The better translation is, *"when the Son of man shall have come"*. This section (vv.31-46) picks back up chronologically where ch.24, v.44 left off. The title "Son of man" is used once again; which was absent in the previous section. The is because the previous section had to do with Christendom, whose proper hope is not the coming of the Son of man, but the coming of the Bridegroom. In this section we have the Son of man as "king"; as a glorified man. What a change — from the rejected Son of man to the glorified Son of man! The Son of man will *"come in his glory"*, accompanied by the heavenly hosts. Saints are not mentioned, but they also come with the glorified Son of man when He appears. After dealing with the confederacies of man in His warrior judgments (Davidic character; 1 Chron. 28:3), Christ's kingdom will be set up. Then the Son will *"sit down upon his throne of glory"*, and will commence His sessional judgments (Solomonic character; 1 Kings 1-2). This will be carried out in perfect order... it will be calm and controlled. All the nations (same word as "Gentiles") will be gathered before Christ, and they will be separated into two groups, the sheep and the goats. We must remember that the nations in the Christianized world will

already have been emptied of “*tares*” in the [Harvest Judgment](#). However, this sessional judgment is regardless of profession... it says “*all the nations*”.

Some have mocked the feasibility of the Lord bringing every living Gentile to the land of Palestine to stand before His throne for judgment. However, this is what the Word of God says, and we must believe it by faith. Also, remember that the population of the earth will be vastly reduced by this time.

Perhaps “*the angels*” are mentioned because they will be employed to gather the living Gentiles, just as they were employed earlier to gather the tares out of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:41), and then gather the elect of Israel back into the land (Matt. 24:31).

**34** Then shall the King say to those on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from *the* world’s foundation: **35** for I hungered, and ye gave me to eat; I thirsted, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; **36** naked, and ye clothed me; I was ill, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came to me. **37** Then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungering, and nourished thee; or thirsting, and gave thee to drink? **38** and when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? **39** and when saw we thee ill, or in prison, and came to thee? **40** And the King answering shall say to them, Verily, I say to you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me. **vv.34-45** The Lord will reveal to all that their personal faith was demonstrated by their treatment of the faithful Jewish remnant, whom he calls “*My brethren*”. The criteria by which the Gentiles will be separated is according to their treatment of the remnant during the period in which the gospel of the kingdom was preached. Rahab is a great example of this. She received the spies of Israel, and later her life was spared when Joshua conquered Jericho. When we get to Hebrews 11, we see that it was an act of faith (Heb. 11:31); “*By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with the unbelieving, having received the spies in peace*”. So with the Gentiles who shelter and care for the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom; Christ’s own brethren. Notice that the king says “*My father*”, not “*your Father*”. It is because these are not Christians (c.p. John 20:17). As an application, we can learn a very practical lesson from this. Our love for Christ is measured by our love for the brethren (1 John 4:20-21). Saul of Tarsus learned this truth; that to persecute the brethren is to persecute the Lord himself (Acts 9). How then ought we to treat our brethren?

**41** Then shall he say also to those on the left, Go from me, cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: **42** for I hungered, and ye gave me not to eat; I thirsted, and ye gave me not to drink; **43** I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked,

and ye did not clothe me; ill, and in prison, and ye did not visit me. **44** Then shall "they" also answer saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or ill, or in prison, and have not ministered to thee? **45** Then shall he answer them saying, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye have not done it to one of these least, neither have ye done it to me. **vv.41-45** Likewise, the goats will learn that their rejection of the gospel and the remnant was the criteria for determining their eternal destiny. An example of this is Shimei, who cursed David in the day of his rejection. When Solomon came to the throne, David instructed him, "*therefore hold him not guiltless... but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood*" (1 Kings 2:8-9). While the sheep are called blessed "of My Father", notice that it doesn't say of the goats cursed "of my Father"... it was never God's intention that men should be eternally damned. The "*eternal fire*" here, which is a reference to the [Lake of fire](#), the Second Death, was never intended for men, but rather "*prepared for the devil and his angels*". It is sad though that men will enter that awful place 1000 years before the devil and his angels! Such is the heart of man.

### **From the World's Foundation.**

It is striking that the blessing of the earthly saints is "*from the foundation of the world*" (Matt.25:34). But the Christian's blessing is "*before the foundation of the world*" (Eph. 1:4). This is because the Church and her union with Christ is the deepest secret in the heart of God (1 Cor. 2:7, 10)... we were there in God's eternal counsels! But Israel's blessing is connected with creation and time. God has purposed to put the creation under the feet of a glorified man (Psa. 8:6; 1 Cor. 15:25-28). But when that purpose with respect to this creation is accomplished, there will be a new heavens and earth, and no more Jew and Gentile (Rev. 21:1-8). Yet for all eternity, the Church will remain distinct (Eph. 3:21), and Christians will never relinquish their status as sons of God!

**46** And these shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal. **v.46**  
The results are eternal and irreversible.

### **Footnotes**

1. *The Works of Flavius Josephus, The War of the Jews. Book 6, Chapter 4, Paragraph 5 - 7*
2. *The Works of Flavius Josephus, The War of the Jews. Book 6, Chapter 4, Paragraph 5 - 7*