

DECODING THE PARABLES - Lesson 5

In this study we consider three parables and metaphors relating to the second coming of Christ (at the end of the 7 year tribulation - Revelation 19).

1. PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

Matthew 25:1-13 gives an account of the bridegroom's arrival and ten virgins or bridesmaids. The ten young ladies each were given lamps to burn to light up the way of the bridegroom's arrival. In the Biblical account, five wise virgins ensured that they had extra oil in case the bridegroom tarried or took a bit longer to arrive. The five foolish virgins who also trimmed their lamps did not have an extra supply of oil and their lamps had gone out.

Whilst they were away seeking a place to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived at midnight and they were shut out of the bridal reception. This parable seeks to promote the importance of being watchful. The five foolish virgins represented Israel who was unprepared to receive the Messiah as the bridegroom. The other five virgins who had the extra oil were well prepared for His arrival.



JEWISH CUSTOMS

Jewish weddings in ancient times were generally celebrated at night, starting at the rise of the evening star. It seems that the bridegroom, for this wedding, was delayed. The custom was that the bridegroom would leave his home, with his friends leading the procession to where the nuptials would follow. His friends would cry out along the route with jubilation and joy that the bridegroom was on his way. The young ladies or virgins were chosen friends of the bride who were instructed to burn lamps held up on poles so that the arrival party could be guided at night to the wedding venue. When the young women heard the bridegroom's friends crying out that the groom was on his way they started to prepare for the grand arrival. In this case, only part of the welcoming party was prepared. This serves to illustrate that the groom's friends were the Jewish prophets who had called on the Nation of Israel to be ready at any time for the Messiah's arrival. Some in the Nation of Israel heeded that cry and accepted the message of the New Covenant i.e. the disciples and 3000 plus a further 5000 who embraced the message of the Messiah after Pentecost. The rest of the nation rejected the cry and therefore represent those in the Nation of Israel who were unprepared for the coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom on the earth.

2. PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matthew 25:14-30 gives an account of the Kingdom of Heaven being likened to a man who is travelling into a far country. He called his servants and gave them talents (Greek *talanton* – one talent a gold talent was equivalent to more than \$30 000).



Some of the servants invested the money that brought them dividends so that the investment grew. One servant buried the money so received no interest. When the man returned and enquired of the servants as to their talents, he praised those who invested their talent and rebuked the unprofitable servant who had simply buried the money.

This parable Jesus spoke to make clear to His listeners that some in the Nation of Israel would not value what He had offered the nation and therefore they would be rejected when Christ returns to earth. Verse 30 declares "*He would cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" This judgement will come upon unbelieving Israel, but those Jewish believers making up national Israel who repented, would receive the rewards they deserved.

3. PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS

Matthew 25:31-46 - This parable focuses on the Judgement of Nations. It will follow the 7 year period of tribulation when the Lord will set up His Kingdom on the earth. All nations will stand before Him and He will separate them as a Shepherd divides the sheep from the goats.



The sheep will be on His right side and the goats on the left. Jesus taught that the nations that treated Israel with respect, dignity and kindness, helping them in their time of need, being separated from their land (dispersion of Israel among the nations) will be entitled to retaining their national identity in the thousand years of peace. The nations that hated Israel and were hostile to her survival will lose their national identity during the Kingdom reign of Jesus Christ on earth. Unbelieving people will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire (which will occur at the end of the 1000 years) and the believing Nation of Israel, including converts from the nations who showed kindness to Israel, will enjoy the benefits of the Kingdom reign on earth.

Individuals in the unbelieving nations who trusted personally in the Messiah and embraced the message preached to them, about God's Kingdom, during the 7 years of tribulation, and those individuals from all nations, who were prepared for the Kingdom era, will be saved although their national identity would have been lost. It is clear in this parable that the sheep are believing nations and the goats refer to the collective nations that do not believe. The "brethren" referred to in verse 40 and 45 is National Israel.

(Christianity/Mystery)

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7 Year Tribulation

(Judgement of Nations)

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Kingdom 1000 years