

The Olivet Parables of Matthew 24-25

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Scriptures from the NKJV

Matthew 24 begins what is commonly called the Olivet Prophecy because it was delivered on the Mount of Olives, about 2 days before Jesus' crucifixion. It was given because the disciples asked when the destruction of Jerusalem, that Jesus had talked about in v2, would take place, and what the sign of His coming and the end of the age would be. Jesus proceeds to describe wars and famines and pestilence, along with earthquakes(v7). He talks about tribulation and persecution (v9). Several times He mentions false prophets and false christs. He describes great tribulation (v21), followed by heavenly signs seen the world over (v29, and he wasn't talking about a benign, almost unnoticed lunar eclipse, or even 4 benign, almost unnoticed lunar eclipses. Afterall, these signs occur after the tribulation, and I don't think we are there yet). But having given all of these signs, Jesus gets down to the when. And in verse 36 He tells them:

(Matthew 24:36) "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

Even Jesus could not tell them at that time when He would return. And in verse 42 He gives them this warning:

(Matthew 24:42) "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming."

The parallel accounts in Mark 13 and Luke 21 end at this point. But Matthew records that Jesus continued His discourse. And He did so by relating 5 parables—5 parables that focus on what He expected His disciples to do since they could not know when He would return. We sometimes look at these parables one at a time, but **today I want to look at them as a group. There are many themes and warnings and parallels that run through these parables, and I want to explore some of those in this message.**

The first parable is in (Matthew 24:43-44), sometimes called the parable of the Master of the House, and which we will read shortly.

The second is a parable of the Faithful and Evil servants. This one is less familiar, so I'm going to take the time to read it now.

(Matthew 24:45-51) (45) "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? (46) "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. (47) "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. (48) "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' (49) "and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, (50) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, (51) "and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The last 3 parables are found in Matthew 25 and are more well-known, so I will just summarize them here: The third is the parable of the 10 Virgins—5 wise, and 5 foolish who did not take enough oil in their lamps and were shut out of the wedding feast when they went to get some. The fourth is the parable of the Talents—servants given various amounts of money, two of whom diligently traded and increased what they were entrusted with, and one who did not. He claimed it was out of fear, but the householder assessed it was because of laziness. And the fifth parable is usually called the parable of the Sheep and Goats—the sheep commended and rewarded for their good deeds toward those in need, and the goats condemned for their lack of compassion.

Although there are many themes that run through these parables, I have only selected the more prominent ones. And I may only point out the more obvious examples, even though some of the other parables may have a theme implied as well:

1. The first and most obvious one is what introduced these parables: **Watch**, for you don't know when the Lord is coming (Matthew 24:43-44; 24:50; 25:13)
 - a. This is the primary message of the first parable, which comes immediately after the instruction to **watch**: (Matthew 24:43-44) (43) "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have **watched** and not allowed his house to be broken into. (44) "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect *Him*."
 - b. It is also found in the second parable: (50) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is **not looking** for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of". Of course, if the servant had been watching instead of what he was doing, he might not have gotten into so much trouble.
 - c. And it is a theme in the third parable of the virgins, which actually concludes with what Jesus had said earlier: (Matthew 25:13) "**Watch** therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."
 - d. So our first message about what to do as we wait, is to **watch**. And while this idea of watching is often interpreted primarily as watching world events, I think it has a stronger application as watching our spiritual condition, as emphasized by some of the other themes.
2. Jesus is not coming back immediately. Don't be complacent that He is delaying His coming, even though there will be a **delay**. (Matthew 24:48; 25:5; 25:19)
 - a. (Matthew 24:48) "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is **delaying** his coming,'"
 - b. (Matthew 25:5) "But while the bridegroom was **delayed**, they all slumbered and slept."
 - c. (Matthew 25:19) "After a **long time** the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them."
 - d. So our second message is "I'm not coming back immediately", adding to the warning that they, and we, are to watch.

3. Be diligently **ready** or He will come when we are not prepared. We shall be ready if we are ready always. (Matthew 24:44;24:50;25:8)
 - a. (Matthew 24:44) "Therefore you also be **ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect *Him*."
 - b. (Matthew 24:50) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is **not looking** for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of,"
 - c. (Matthew 25:6-10) (6) "And at midnight a cry was *heard*: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' (7) "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. (8) "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' [they weren't **ready**] (9) "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' (10) "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were **ready** went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut."
 - d. Be **ready**, be prepared, for an unexpected return. After all, it seems obvious Jesus isn't going to come back within the next year, but for any one of us, he could come back "tomorrow".

4. Be about the business God wants us engaged in (Matthew 24:45-46; 25:15-23; 25:40)
 - a. Taking care of those in our trust: (Matthew 24:45-46) (45) "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? (46) "Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."
 - b. Taking care of those in need: (Matthew 25:35-36) "'for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; (36) 'I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'" (Matthew 25:40) "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me."
 - c. Improving our talents and what the Lord has given us: (Matthew 25:15-23) (15) "And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. (16) "Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. (17) "And likewise he who *had received* two gained two more also. (18) "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. (19) "After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. (20) "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' (21) "His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'
 - d. There is much more we need to be doing of course, but these examples come out in these parables.

5. Sub-themes connected with these same 3 parables include:
 - a. Be faithful in the little things, before getting the big things (24:45-47 wise servant; talents; sheep/goats)
 - b. We all must give account when he returns (24:46,50;25:19;25:31-32)
 - i. (Matthew 25:31-32) (31) *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. (32) "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."*

6. The **reward** is great (24:47;25:10;25:21,29;25:34)
 - a. (Matthew24:46-47) (46) *"Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. (47) "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him **ruler over all his goods.**"*
 - b. (Matthew25:10) *"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready **went in with him to the wedding;** and the door was shut."*
 - c. (Matthew25:21) *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will **make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.**"*

*(Matthew25:28-29) (28) "'Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. (29)'For to **everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance;** but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away."*
 - d. (Matthew25:34) *"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**"*

7. So far we have focused mainly on the positive message. But these parables also discuss what not to do. First, don't **mistreat** others (24:49; goats)
 - a. Not our fellow servants (Matthew24:49) *The evil servant "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,"*
 - b. And not those in need (Matthew25:42-43) (42) *Jesus says to those on His left hand "'for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; (43) 'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me."*

8. Which brings up a very important related theme: Don't be guilty of **inaction** (talents 25:18,24-27, goats 25:41-45, even virgins 25:3, householder 24:43). And don't make **excuses** for not doing what is right (25:24-25; 25:44-45).
- a. (Matthew25:44-45) (44) "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, **when** did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' (45) "Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'" They were guilty of not helping those in need.
 - b. (Matthew25:18) "But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money." Then he made **excuses**: (Matthew25:24-27) (24) "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. (25) 'And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' (26) "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. (27) 'Therefore you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.'" He was guilty of not making even the least investment.
 - c. (Matthew25:3) "Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them," Not preparing for the bridegroom's arrival.
 - d. (Matthew24:43) "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into."

9. In spite of surprise and dismay at being rejected (Matthew 25:11; 25:30; 25:44), the punishment for those who are not ready is very **unpleasant** (Matthew 24:51; 25:12; 25:30; 25:41)

- a. (Matthew 24:50-51) (50) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, (51) "and will **cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**"
- b. (Matthew 25:11-12) (11) "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' (12) "But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, **I do not know you.**"
- c. (Matthew 25:30) "And cast the unprofitable servant into the **outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**"
- d. (Matthew 25:41) "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the **everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels:"
(Matthew 25:44) "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'"
(Matthew 25:46) "And these will go away into **everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life."

10. Corollary: No deathbed repentance. Repenting after He returns is too late to participate in the initial reward (virgins, goats).

These are just a few of the themes, instructions and warnings Jesus gave in His last parables. Jesus said He could not tell them when He would return. Even now, we may not know when He will return. But in His concluding parables He left us with no excuse regarding what we should be doing until He does.