

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Tom Stephens

Jesus Grieves Over Jerusalem...Again

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’” (Matthew 23:37-39—New American Standard Bible)

Jerusalem stands for all the Jewish people, but this prophecy specifically looks to the city’s destruction. The Jewish leaders had stoned and killed the prophets and others whom God had sent to the nation to bring them back to him. By the constant rejection of God’s messengers, they had sealed their fate. Jesus wanted to gather the nation and bring it to repentance, but the people were hard and unwilling. In this passage, we see the depth of Jesus’ love for this lost people and for His beloved city that would soon be destroyed. He took no pleasure in prophesying the coming destruction of Jerusalem, and the Jewish people who rejected him. Jesus may have been speaking of Jeremiah 12:7, when He said, *“I will forsake my house; I will give the one I love into the hands of her enemies”*. Jeremiah had prophesied the coming destruction of the temple by the Babylonians. The nation’s sin sealed their punishment, and God’s presence left the temple. But the people’s refusal to accept Him would have severe consequences, for He would again leave the temple. The temple stood for the people’s relationship with God; a desolate temple meant separation from God. The words, *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”*, are a repeat of the words of the crowd during Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem (21:9).¹

Never think you are so bad, so undeserving that God would not love you. If such thoughts trouble you, read Matthew 23 from the beginning. Though it’s filled with bad guys, Jesus would gather all of them unto Himself, if only they would *be willing*.

Jesus Speaks Concerning the Future

The Jews at that time were proud of their temple so when Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples were quick to point out to him the buildings of the temple. They should have known Jesus would not be impressed. He asked them, *“You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”* (NRSV) Jesus obviously spoke of the grand structures of the temple; but then he said, “The wonder of the world would be completely destroyed. As in the days of the prophet Jeremiah, the destruction of the Jews’ temple would be God’s punishment for turning away from him. Jeremiah had spoken God’s words to the rebellious nation, *“I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals”* (Jeremiah 9:11—NIV).

As Jesus was leaving the city to return to Bethany for the night, he would have crossed the Kidron Valley, and then he would have headed up the slope of the Mount of Olives which rises above Jerusalem to the east. From this slope, he and the disciples could look down into the city and see the temple. The prophet Zechariah predicted that the Messiah would stand on that mountain when he returned to set up his eternal kingdom (Zech. 14:1-4) “And as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, tell us, **1**) when shall these things be? and **2**) what shall be the sign of thy coming, **3**) and of the end of the world?” (Matt. 24:3)

Note that the Disciples asked Jesus three important questions:

1. When shall these things be?
2. What shall be the sign of thy coming?
3. What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Question 1: Jesus looked to the future and foretold the city’s destruction, saying it would take place 40 years later, in 70 A.D., when the Romans, led by General Titus, destroyed the city, fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 3:12:

“Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.” (Most of question number 1 was responded to in the above passages). The stones from this same temple make up the wailing wall today where for centuries the Jews wept and prayed for the rebuilding of the Temple and for the restoration of the kingdom of David. Ironically, at the time Israel became a nation in 1948, Jerusalem was divided and the wailing wall was on the Arab side. So, for a period of time, the Jewish people were unable to pray at the wall, but they later regained the area. There they continued to pray for the ushering in of the Messianic Kingdom. Because of the destruction of the beautiful city of Jerusalem, the answer to the disciples’ first question became history (the destruction was in the past), whereas the next two questions remain into the future.²

Question 2: *“What Shall Be The Sign Of Thy Coming?”*

Jesus obviously knew that certain truths we are to witness in the soon future would not be understood by the Disciples, such as “the rapture of the church”; for the New Testament had not, at the time of this discourse, even been written in the Word of God, *and was not a doctrine of the Old Testament*. The Disciples’ question was in two parts. They wanted to know 1) When will this happen? (referring to the destruction of the temple, which was a current event at the time), and 2) What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? The second part of their question referred to the Messiah’s reign in God’s kingdom. In the disciples’ minds, one may even occur immediately after the other. They expected the Messiah to inaugurate his kingdom soon, and they wanted to know what the signs were (see Matthew 24)

Related Matching Events in Both Matthew and Revelation

Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:51, made this statement: *“Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...”* The mystery meant that the rapture had been hidden.

In this second question, Jesus gave many signs that we understand will take place during the tribulation. There is a unity between the signs given by Jesus to His disciples in Matthew and those He gives to John in Revelation 6. For instance:

In Matthew 24:4 Jesus speaks of deception. Deception is also the theme of the **1st Judgment Seal** in Revelation 6.

In Matthew 24: Wars and rumors of Wars are mentioned by Christ; and in the **2nd Seal Judgment**, in Revelation 6, the rider of the red horse takes peace from the world

In Matthew 24:7, Jesus speaks of famine, and is represented by the **3rd Seal Judgment in Revelation 6**.

In Matthew 24:7, Jesus speaks of Pestilences which will follow in the **4th Judgment Seal in Revelation 6**.

In Matthew 24:7, The 5th Seal Judgment would compare to the death of the martyrs, which can be implied from the statement of Christ in Mat. 24:9, that Israel will be afflicted, and many of them will be killed.

The final **6th Judgment Seal** can be matched with the earthquakes which Christ mentioned in His response to the disciples in Matthew 24:7.

The beginning of sorrows, not the ending. They are the birth pangs of Israel, according to Matthew 24:8. Vs. 1-14 of Matthew 24 show how Israel will be afflicted, and many Gentiles will be killed and hated of all nations. By the ministry of false prophets, many will be deceived and apostasy will prevail.

Verse 15 mentions the abomination of desolation. Sacrifices will be denied and the temple will be polluted with sacrilegious practices. Daniel spoke of this abomination in 12:11. The Antichrist will be responsible for much of the abominations. He (antichrist) will pollute the temple and encourage image worship. All of this begins at the halfway point of the tribulation period. He also breaks the covenant he previously made with Israel. The Jews scatter to a place called “Petra”—protection from her enemies for the remainder of the final 3 and a half years.

The antichrist introduces this period by breaking the covenant he made with Israel. The Jews scatter to all neighboring countries to escape his persecution. In Matthew 24:16-20 Jesus warns all Jews to flee at this time. Unbelieving Jews will be deceived by the antichrist (Rev. 13:11-18). These fall into apostasy, and if they receive the mark, name, or number of the beast, they are doomed for eternity.

For the sake of the elect who are not deceived by the Antichrist, the days of the tribulation will be shortened and Christ will come to end these days of horror. The entire period of the tribulation will thus end after seven years.

Before Christ returns, the Antichrist will mobilize his army and take it down to the battle in the area from which Jesus warns Israel to flee. Chapter 24: 40-51, show this mobilization. Luke refers to the same mobilization in chapter 17, and tells in verse 37 where this army is to be taken. (Ezekiel 39:17-21; Revelation 19: 17-21)

When Christ does return at the end of the tribulation, He will bring destruction upon His enemies as complete as the destruction of Noah's flood.

“For as in the days before the flood they...knew not until the flood came and took them all away” (Matthew 24:38).

In other words, they were all destroyed, and Jesus said it would be like this when He returns in power against His enemies. Only those who are not killed in the Battle of Armageddon will be left to live on in the Millennium. (Zechariah 14:16-21).

The End of The Age

The third question was answered in part by Christ's response to the first two questions. He used a fig tree as an illustration of the timing of His coming and the end of the age: “Behold, the fig tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know...that summer is now nigh at hand” (Luke 21:29). Just as the fig tree puts forth new shoots as a sure sign of summer, so will the fulfillment of all the signs given in answer to the first two questions show the end of the age is near. The fig tree was simply convenient as an illustration and not meant to represent Israel.

So, what about the Ten Bridesmaids? Christ dealt with this group immediately following Matthew 24, in the first 13 verses of Matthew 25. It seems the message changes drastically; but when we consider that the verses of chapter 24:42-51 speak of “Faithful and Unfaithful Servants”, we can realize chapter 25 certainly does agree solidly with chapters 23 and 24. These verses are the introduction to Chapter 25:1-13. I feel that somehow Jesus had a stronger message in chapter 25 than what is commonly declared to be the true intent of Jesus when He authorized St. Matthew to pen...

...“The Parable Of The Ten Virgins”

¹Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. ²And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: ⁴But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. ⁷Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. ⁹But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. ¹⁰And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. ¹¹Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. ¹²But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. ¹³Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:1-13)

Matthew 25 deals with the 10 virgins (vs. 1-13), the talents (vs. 14-30), and the judgment of the nations (vs. 31-46). (In this discussion, we deal *only* with the first 13 verses). The Parable of the 10 virgins is a continuation of the answer to the third question of the disciples, “What shall be the sign of the end of the age?” and is connected with the subject of the 2nd coming of Christ to earth by the word, *then*. “*Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to 10 virgins...*” (Matthew 25:1) This shows reference to the kingdom of heaven and not to the Church.

Some reasons for rejecting the view that the virgins represent the Church during this present age.

- 1) The word *oil* in this instance has no reference to the Holy Spirit, as they were told to go and purchase *from them that sold*. The Holy Spirit is a *free gift*.
- 2) Verse 5 says that they all slumbered and slept, both wise and foolish. If the virgins refer to the church, this would indicate they were *all* in a spirit of lethargy. (Revelation 3:16).
- 3) Verse 7 states that all arose and trimmed their lamps. At the rapture, which takes place ‘in the twinkling of an eye,’ no one will have time to repent. Christ will be looking for those who are ready!
- 4) There are not two kinds of Christians, but only one—the born-again believer who *does* receive the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:5; Romans 8:9, 14-16).
- 5) The door of mercy will not be closed after the rapture of the Church because many will be saved *during* the tribulation (Rev. 7:9-14; Acts 2:21).
- 6) There is nothing in scripture to indicate the rapture will take place at midnight. In fact, even of His 2nd coming, much less of the rapture, Jesus plainly said, “*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matthew 24:36).³

Could it be many are reading more into the parable of the virgins that what Christ intended? Perhaps it is only an illustration of the timing of the rapture of the church which, like the coming of the bridegroom in the parable, could happen at any time. And given the events happening all around us, surely the call is about to go forth “*the bridegroom cometh – go ye out to meet him!*” Let us trim our lamps **now** while there is time so we will be ready.

¹life Application Bible Commentary. © 1996 by The Livingstone Corporation; Pages 460-461.

²Prophesy Marches On!- ©1963, 1964, 1994 by John G. Hall; Pgs 60-61.

³Ibid. Pages 487-489

Blessings from Christ’s Bondservants

www.christsbondservants.org