

~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:

The two parables found in the second half of Jesus' Olivet Discourse underscore the primary and repeated theme found in the first half. Obviously, Jesus wanted His disciples to be ready at His coming. If there were no possibility of them not being ready---if they were "unconditionally eternally secure" as so many today think they are---there would have been no reason to warn them of the consequences of being unready. The heightened deception during the final days warrants His almost redundant admonitions in this regard.

There are, actually, three parables contained in the Olivet Discourse that generally all emphasize the need to be prepared for what lies ahead. The first, that of the unfaithful servant, we read yesterday. Remember that the unfaithful slave, who believed that his master would not return for a long time, found himself unprepared, and he was cast into hell (24:51). That parable, like the other two, was not spoken to the unregenerate multitudes in order to motivate them to repent and be saved. Rather, it was directed to the already saved (see Mark 13:3) in order to motivate them to remain faithful.

The parable of the ten virgins teaches essentially the same truth. The five foolish virgins do not represent non-believers. Notice that they were waiting for the bridegroom, just like the other five. Initially, they were ready, but they became unready and were thus excluded from the wedding feast. More specifically, they were not prepared if the bridegroom, who clearly represents Christ, was delayed. Had he come earlier, they would have been ready.

How applicable this is to many modern professing Christians. They are not prepared to wait for Christ during tribulation and persecution, expecting to be raptured long before. I wonder how many will fall away during dire circumstances?

The parable of the talents is also a story about believers. Keep in mind once again that Jesus spoke this parable to Peter, Andrew, James and John. The slave who was given one talent was just as much a slave of the master as were the slaves who were given two and five talents. He was entrusted with something that belonged to his master, and he was required to give an account when his master returned, just like the others. Yet, because of his unfaithfulness, he was cast into hell. He was unprepared, having no return to show on his master's investment.

Again, how applicable this is to many modern professing Christians who have all been entrusted with time and treasure by God, but who give their time only for a weekly church service, and who only contribute their treasure to what benefits themselves. But you won't find giving towards church buildings and sanctuary carpeting in Jesus' list of sacrifices that separate the sheep from the goats. Rather, true sheep meet the pressing needs of the most disadvantaged among Jesus' family, providing food, water, clothing, shelter, comfort and compassion. Every good work Jesus mentioned requires time or money. Those who have not invested their time and treasure in such good works are goats, and they will be exposed as goats and cast into hell when Jesus returns. Thus Jesus' foretelling of the judgment of the sheep and the goats is His ultimate lesson, and a very specific lesson, on being ready for His return.

Finally, notice that the goats were quite surprised at their judgment. Their questioning Jesus implied that they would surely have come to His assistance had they seen Him suffering. But those who love Bible Jesus love His suffering brothers and sisters. American Jesus has no such expectations of His followers---who will certainly be among those future goats.

A final thought: In the parable of the talents, the master agreed with the one-talent slave that he was "a hard man, reaping where [he] did not sow and gathering where [he] scattered no seed" (25:24, 26), a tacit admission of being a bandit of sorts. Thus, as in most parables, here is a detail with no spiritual counterpart, as God does not expect a return where He does not invest. The parable of the talents makes that ever so clear.