

The Book of Matthew Study Guide

Matthew 25-26

25:1-13

Yeshua continues His answer to the disciples in chapter 24 about signs of His coming again by telling the parable of the ten virgins. The theme is preparedness for that day.

The imagery is taken from the way that marriages were conducted in the biblical culture. The custom was for the bridegroom to go to the home of the bride when He was finished preparing a dwelling place for the two of them, and thus ready to be married. Upon arrival at the bride's home he would shout for her to come out, along with her entourage. Then they would all go to his home for the culmination of the marriage process, including the great celebration of the marriage feast.

The issue in this parable involves having sufficient oil in your lamp as you await the appearance of the bridegroom. The oil may represent the role of the Word of God or the Holy Spirit, both of which enable believers to be prepared for all circumstances of life. The latter interpretation is supported in the parable because the virgins without the oil expect to be admitted to the marriage feast, but they are denied entry, with the bridegroom declaring that they are not on the guest list. That is consistent with the way that believers are indwelt by the Spirit at the time of their spiritual regeneration, so if the virgins are denied entrance, it is consistent with people not being saved, and thus not indwelt by the Spirit.

Notice also that these unprepared virgins expect to be invited to the marriage feast. This aspect illustrates the way that some people think they deserve to be in heaven (because they are religious) but they are unredeemed and thus will be denied entrance.

25:14-30

Yeshua follows up with a second parable. The man has great wealth that he entrusts to his servants when he goes on a journey. The measurement of wealth in this parable is the talent.

A talent was the largest measure of weight in the Ancient Near East. It varied over time and region, but in Judea during the days of Yeshua, it was the equivalent of 130 lbs of silver. Today, that amount of silver would be worth about \$30,000. In those days it was the equivalent of 39 years of wages for a laborer.

But the reason Yeshua used the talent in this parable, rather than the more common and less valuable denarius or shekel, is to interject a sense of hyperbole. He is merely saying that the man entrusted something really valuable to the servants. Two of them invested it and one didn't.

The talents of the parable represent the spiritual gifts that God gives to us. Notice that just as the man gave varying degrees of wealth to the servants, some believers are given varying numbers and types of gifts than others. But it doesn't matter – God expects us to use and invest whatever we have been given in the lives of other people. And that is what it means to be prepared for the Lord's return.

25:31-46

Yeshua was not specifically asked regarding what takes place after His return, but He describes the judgment that will take place anyway. Again He uses figurative language, with sheep

representing the righteous and goats representing the unrighteous.

v. 46 sums up the separation of people into those categories as being unto eternal punishment or eternal life. That act is reminiscent of Daniel 12: 2 – “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”

The casting of the unredeemed into the place of eternal fire indicates that it will not be a simple end of consciousness, but will continue indefinitely.

26:1-5

Yeshua reveals his divine omniscience by foretelling his death in two days. Meanwhile, the religious leaders are plotting that very event. They decide not to seize him in view of the public, which shows their own sense of moral corruption because they recognize their plan is not compatible with the people of the land.

26:6-13

A woman who is identified by John as Mary Magdalene (Jn 12:1-8) pours perfume on Yeshua’s head. In v. 12 He declares that it is an act of preparation for His looming burial, which is an allusion to the way that bodies were rubbed with perfume and spices after death.

Yeshua criticizes the disciples’ pragmatic view that the perfume could be sold and used for other practical purposes because He was affirming the importance of loving God with all your heart. There is nothing too extravagant when it comes to our expression of love toward Him.

26:14-16

The betrayal of Yeshua by Judas at a cost of 30 silver coins is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 11:12.

26:17-30

Yeshua and the disciples observe Passover together. He uses this time to reveal two truths. One is that He would be betrayed by one of His disciples. The second truth is how the observance of Passover points to Yeshua and how He fulfills the New Covenant.

When Yeshua declared that He was going to be betrayed by one of them, Mark and Luke record in their gospels that they discussed among themselves who it might be, and Matthew records the specific response of Judas. But when Yeshua declared that the bread (*afikomen*) and the (third) cup of the Seder symbolized His broken body and shed blood, no response from the disciples is recorded anywhere in the Gospels. The difference in their responses may be an indication that they understood the nature of betrayal but did not fully comprehend what Yeshua was teaching regarding the symbols. It is also possible that the disciples did understand it but simply became quiet because of the awesome nature of what was being said.

26:31-35

Yeshua warns that all of the disciples will “fall away” (KJV “be offended”), Gr. *skandalizo* – lit. “stumble.” Why would the disciples deny that they would ever do that? It is human nature to think more highly of our integrity than we ought to. We talk a better talk than our actual actions.

26:37-56

They head to the garden of Gethsemane, and the disciples are supposed to keep watch while

Yeshua prays. Yet they fall asleep.

Cups are symbolic of judgment in Scripture. v. 39 – So in Yeshua’s first prayer, He declares that if it is possible, that the cup or judgment awaiting Him could be avoided. In vv. 42 and 44 He prayed the same thing again, This demonstrates the incredible act that awaited Him – taking on the judgment for the sins of all humanity.

v. 47 – The act of betrayal takes place.

v. 51 – One of the disciples (Peter) attempts to kill the slave of the high priest, but only cuts off his ear. By healing the slave and criticizing the violent act, Yeshua showed that the way believers conduct themselves must be distinct from the way that non-believers act.

26:57-68

- Yeshua is taken before Caiaphas the high priest. The proceedings were illegal for a number of reasons:

- The arrest was illegal because it was tainted by a bribe, which should have produced a mistrial right away.
- The trial took place at night, which was forbidden.
- The Sanhedrin, which served as the judges, was prohibited from bringing the charges and could only rule on the evidence. Several false witnesses came forward, but apparently each one came with a different fictitious claim. Finally, no doubt through the arrangement of the Sanhedrin, another false claim was made, but this time it was by two witnesses, which was required according to Torah. They said He was going to destroy the temple of God. The actual statement Yeshua made was:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” (John 2:19-21)

- Trying serious cases was forbidden right before the feasts
- Cases with a possible capital punishment were not allowed to be concluded in one day in order to allow witnesses to come forward in support of the accused.
- The prosecution was illegal.
- False witnesses claimed that Yeshua was going to destroy the temple by violence.
- No supporting evidence was provided. But when Yeshua declared that He was the Son of Man and had divine attributes (v. 64) that evidence was considered to be a confirmation. But that was for a completely different charge of blasphemy. Nevertheless the two distinct and unrelated “crimes” were combined into one illegally and they had all the confirmation they needed.
- No defense was permitted.
- Later, when they brought Him before the Roman ruler Pilate, they changes the charge altogether, saying He was guilty of sedition (rising up treasonously against the state), claiming that He was teaching people not to pay their taxes to Rome (Lk 23:2).

26:69-75

The chapter concludes with Peter’s three denials of Yeshua, just as had been foretold.