

Matthew 25

Read Matthew 25:1-13: This chapter begins with a sobering illustration of how the saved and unsaved can be somewhat indistinguishable. If we fear God and hell, we will lean forward and pay close attention to the instructions here. It is a fitting follow up to the end-times events of Matthew 24. A wise man will move out of harm's way.

Not everything is at it seems. The church attendees are a mixture of believers and unbelievers. This chapter begins by breaking down the group who collectively assemble in Jesus' name. There are two groups in this congregation. The nation of Israel also traveled as a *mixed multitude*; meaning that there were other tag-along people who were not Jews.

Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, (Exodus 12:37-38)

The *mixed multitude* concept also can refer to the mixed group in a church. There are believers and unbelievers. There are also those who walk according to their calling and those who are walking in a way that is unworthy of their relationship with God.

← CANAL CHRISTIANS

"The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. (2 Timothy 2:19-20)

...and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them,

tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)— *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment (2 Peter 2:7-9)

God is into reality; not labels. We are not identified in mass. The label of *fool* is often used for those who lack awareness or vision to get through life. In the Bible a fool is a person who does not fear God. So biblically a fool can be an intelligent person. We can fool each other; but God takes inventory of each life.

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 1:4)

He called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer's inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." (Ezekiel 9:4)

and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)— *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment (2 Peter 2:7-9) *

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Wisdom is based on action; not knowledge. Do we procrastinate, or move swiftly on God's directions? Wisdom also receives correction when we are self-assured.

Understanding is a wellspring of life to him who has it. But the correction of fools is folly. The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, And adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones. There is a way that ~~★~~ seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 16:22-25)

You rebuke the proud—the cursed, Who stray from Your commandments.

Remove from me reproach and contempt, For I have kept Your testimonies. (Psalm 119:22)

We can model 'godly behavior'; but God sees our motivations and knows if we are walking with him.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:17-20)

We cannot always correctly discern where men's hearts and beliefs are.

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. I Never Knew You "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Matthew 7:16-23)

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DOWN
THE
BAPTIST

The appearances of faith and church attendance and outreach participation and good works are not the ticket. *This is scary.* As you pan across the church pews who is saved and who is not?

1. Our fruit:

- a. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22)
- b. Fruit is a manner of living with genuine love for God and fellow believers is fruit. Evangelizing and soul-saving is not fruit.

FAITH AND FEAR ARE OPPOSITES

2. Those who do what God tells them: There are a few who read the Bible. There are even fewer who look for personal application and do it. The word disciple comes from the discipline of committing to follow God's direction according to our best ability. How serious are you? Do you take notes when you read the scriptures?
3. Knowing God is described here as being equivalent to having oil in our lamps. Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit, or are you just in a Bible reading club? Those who do not know God are described here as sleeping; meaning that they have *no sense of urgency to carry out God's commands*. Is God telling you to do something? We push ourselves to get our lives in order, while frequently procrastinating on what the Holy Spirit has brought to our attention. A daily fellowship with God is how we get to know the Holy Spirit. How familiar is that still-quiet voice?

PAY ATTENTION

Read Mathew 25:14-30: Jesus left for heaven; and the Holy Spirit simultaneously came in to our lives on earth. All things that God does are advantageous to us.

"But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (John 16:5-7)

The servants made an increase by *trading*. That is significant. We do not have enough time to do all of our faith activities and our daily activities. They traded some. That can mean that sometimes you just do what God told you; and leave others undone for another day. We tend to bow to the tyranny of the urgent; and God's stuff gets pushed back. This could also mean that those who trade out more of life's business in exchange for more of God's activities go further in the kingdom.

ACT IN
FAITH
AND THOSE
"THINGS"
WILL BE
TAKEN OF
BY THE
LORD

We have been given skills and opportunities. If you were made to be a wrench; are you tightening bolts? Are we just sitting in the LORD's tool box being unused? If you want to fly; place yourself where the LORD needs you. The unfaithful servant did not act because of fear and laziness. Our distrust for God in the small things keeps us from being more active. We rush around out of fear for not getting things done. It is easier to commit to God for what should be done; and work out the details of the rest.



We were given crystal clear instructions on how to spend our lives; just before Jesus ascended to heaven. Here are our marching orders from God:

1. **Make disciples** of Christ everywhere (start close by; and reach out from there)
 - a. Baptism is the first act of faith for us and those who we disciple
 - b. Teaching God's word precisely, without adding or subtracting anything


And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples

of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Obviously we are not all evangelists or Bible teachers. Regardless, the orders still stand. We start out like *sleep-walkers* who get woken up to smell the coffee; and realize that we have to *get going*. The fields are white (ripe) for the harvest; but the laborers are few. In my case; I came to a friend's Bible study in High School. I had attended church my whole life; and believed that God was real. I was skeptical about his church having more *information* than mine. Their study took God's word more seriously than my church did. Their congregation was not made up of better folks. My eyes were opened; and my appetite for the word of God was whetted. I began to see more as I committed to dig deeper. I began to do my own research and daily Bible study back in 1978. The starting point of personal revival is to rebuild *our own temple* (so to speak). It is like deferred maintenance on an old building. I was now drinking in the word with eyes that could see much better than before. I encountered resistance to growth as well. We will have to make trades. This is the sacrifice concept. Our quiet time with God is always the starting point. Without a daily relationship it becomes an academic exercise and a burden.

I began a Bible study with my parents in High School. They were somewhat agreeable. They also had attended a church their whole life, and believed in God. They thought that I was going too deep; and was potentially getting unbalanced by being too focused on God. Fast-forward 38 years later: My parents are reaching new peaks in their faith in their 80's. They study the word every day; and belong to a Bible study group at their new church. It has taken decades to

see them go from curious, to open-minded, to favorable, to recognizing the need for change, to being public witnesses who are willing to share what God has done for them.

The difference between a person who believes the Bible is true, and being a *disciple* may never happen. The word disciple comes from the root word in discipline. Are we getting fed God's word by others, or do we have a growth plan wherein we do our own Biblical exploration and mining? Once our faith becomes healthy; there will be signs of fruit. Obviously healthy sheep produce offspring. As believers who are making efforts to pursue God; our spiritual health will reproduce faith in the lives of others. 

Read Matthew 25:31-46: Matthew 24 described the events leading up to the LORDS return. This chapter describes how to be included in the group that joins God for eternity. These verses further describe what Jesus will do as his first orders of business upon his return.

The first thing that happens is that Jesus returns to the Mount of Olives in a similar way that he ascended. Then he will put down godless uprisings and put things in order. He will demand that the nations present themselves before him. He will divide those who have honored God from those have disregarded his word.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in

fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:11-16)

We can fall into the category of a *sheep* or *goat*. A goat is not as easily herded; and is prone to go their own way. They are more self-sufficient. A goat has a small amount of self-defense. Sheep band together and are pretty helpless. Our ability can get in our way of submitting fully to the good shepherd.

The *sheep* who Jesus takes in, are those who reach out to others and help those in need. Meeting physical needs is definitely part of our calling. Start trading business in our schedule to be more about our father's business.