

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

As we study Matthew 25 and the kingdom of God, it is easy to see the connection with judgment day. The five wise and five foolish virgins will be judged according to how they prepared. The five talent, two talent, and one talent men were judged according to their participation. Then in the great judgment scene the proclamation is made in regards to what we as servants have done or not done in God's kingdom.

The account of the virgins should teach us to be prepared. In Matthew 25:1-13 we read of these wise and foolish virgins. The difference between the wise and the foolish seems to be preparation. It would be the same as saying the five prepared and the five unprepared. If we are going to be the king of servant we should be in God's kingdom, we will utilize every opportunity to be ready and stay ready. This is why Matthew summed up this account by saying, "*watch...*" (Matthew 25:13). H. Leo Boles in his commentary on Matthew wrote:

"Christians are like the virgins waiting for Christ's return in a long night of uncertainty; of the hour of that event they can know nothing, therefore they must be ready for it at all times. We watch by serving the Lord as faithfully as if he were looking upon us; we watch by being on our guard against every temptation and danger. Watchfulness is a state of readiness. The warning to watch bids us to imitate the five wise virgins and to take warning from the fate of the five foolish ones" (p. 479).

If we are wise we will be preparing for the return of Christ. His return is certain (cf. I Thessalonians 4:13-18). We would be wise to heed the advice of Amos, "... *prepare to meet thy God...*" (Amos 4:12). Our preparation will come throughout our obedience and faithfulness. Are we wise or foolish?

Every individual will determine if they are going to use their talents to participate in the work of the kingdom. There is no such person as one who has "NO TALENTS." I know you can hear individual claim they have no talents, but this is merely an excuse to keep them from working. In my opinion, the most scathing rebuke found in the scriptures is unleashed against this servant. Christ said, "...*Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strwed: though outest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own usury*" (Matthew 25:26-27). How would you like to be called "wicked and slothful?" This servant was unfaithful because he wouldn't work. Strange isn't it? A servant that didn't want to work! Yet, there are Christians today who don't work, won't work, or seek ways of getting out of work. As workers it is imperative for us to see the urgency of the work in the kingdom of God. Christ said, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work*" (John 9:4). One of the most common excuses today to get out of work is, "There is just no one who wants to hear the Gospel anymore." That is not true! The truth is what Christ said, "*the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye there fore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest*" (Matthew 9:38-39). The problem with many servants in God's kingdom is we have the "I CAN'T" syndrome. We look at our weaknesses, shortcomings, and failures and simply give us. We should be as Paul and say, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Philippians 4:13). If it was left up to us alone, we probably couldn't accomplish our work. Aren't you thankful that it isn't left up to us? Through Christ (Philippians 4:13) we can accomplish our work.

Christ is going to proclaim whether or not we are righteous or wicked. How you

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

SALVATION, A NATURAL RESULT

Text: _____

I. Salvation, a Natural Result to _____

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II. Salvation, a Natural Result to _____

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III. Salvation, a Natural Result to _____

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THE PRINCE OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS

Text: _____

I. The Vast _____

- A. Rebuke _____ and Call to _____
- B. The _____ of _____
- C. To Utter _____ to Prove _____
- D. To Proclaim _____ Hope

II. The Majestic _____

- A. God's _____
- B. God's _____

III. The Messianic _____

- A. _____ of _____
- B. _____ to the _____
- C. _____ for _____

might ask? If will be determined by what we have done in His kingdom. As servants, we know whether or not we are “faithful servants” or “wicked/slothful servants.” We now right now! Servants, who are unfaithful in their obedience, labor, and life, don’t have to wonder, “Is my Master pleased?” They know the answer. Servants, who are obedient, hard working, and living a life that brings honor and glory to the Master, don’t have to wonder. We can know the Master is pleased! Those servants can be assured, *“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matthew 25:34). Judgment day will be a time when our wickedness or faithfulness will be proclaimed. This is why Paul said, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (II Corinthians 5:10). Solomon stated, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret things, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). What will Christ proclaim about us on that day?

-Ronnie Hayes

DID ANYONE SPIT ON ME?

Every now and then somebody quits attending because someone hurt their feelings. When we consider it, it doesn’t make sense for us to take it out on God when He had nothing to do with what hurt our feelings. Someone suggested that asking these questions would help:

- Did anyone spit on me? They did on Jesus.
- Did anyone beat me on the back? They did Him.
- Did anyone press a crown of thorns on my brow? They did His.
- Did anyone hang me on a cross? They did Jesus.

They did all this to Him and more. Yet He did not quit because He came to pay the price for our salvation. Anyone who lets anyone or anything cause them to forsake the Lord Jesus has forgotten the price paid for them.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

THE BOOK OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

The book of Isaiah is the first of the final seventeen books of the Old Testament known as the prophetic books. These books were written by men whom God called upon to be His spokesmen in warning the people in times of crisis and distress. They were responsible for rebuking Israel for their past sins, warning them of current and future dangers, and the foretelling of future events. Each true prophet spoke by divine authority as is attested by more than a thousand Old Testament references, and their credibility was easily determined as to whether their prophecies came to pass (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). The work of the sixteen prophets extended to six groups of people including Israel, Nineveh, Babylon, Jews in the land of captivity, Edom, and Judah. Isaiah's task was unto the dweller's of Judah.

Isaiah, the writer, identifies self and time of service in verse one: *"The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah"* (Isaiah 1:1). History, then, would place the prophetic work of Isaiah from 759-698 B.C. At this same time Micah was also prophesying in Judah and Amos and Hosea were working in Israel. As is evident, Isaiah was working prior to the captivities of both Israel and Judah, but these nations were already walking the spiritual road that would lead them to exile. What is likewise evident then would be the focus of Isaiah's work, and that was trying to get the people to repent so as to avoid the consequences that would surely come. The spiritual state of Judah at the time is well determined by Isaiah's proclamation on the sinful nation:

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1:4-9).

This written prophecy is often depicted as the "miniature Bible" because of its arrangement and focus. Dunn said regarding this:

"It has 66 chapters with two main divisions of 39 and 27 chapters. The first division, like the 39 books of the Old Testament, emphasize God's judgment upon immoral and idolatrous men. The last part presents the grace of God in the promise of the redeemer, concluding with the final judgment. Like the 27 books of the New Testament, these chapters declare a message of hope in the promise of a Redeemer "to bear a cross and wear a crown."

It is from the two sections, one from each, that the book of Isaiah provides two of the most widely known and significant passages in all of the Bible. First, in Isaiah 2:2-3 there is found a great prophecy and description of the coming kingdom:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

Deliverance would eventually come to Jerusalem, but the people are warned that it would come in the last days (final dispensation of time) when the crowning achievement of the Lord would be established in Jerusalem which would be exalted to the heavens and would be open and accepting of all nationalities. Many would seek the kingdom in which they knew the law of the Lord would be made known to them and would then spread forth to all nations under heaven. This prophecy, among others, allows New Testament Christians today to identify what the true church of the Bible was to be, based upon general characteristics of it. To the Jews it was hope to come, but to men today it is hope realized in looking forward to the salvation that awaits that church (Ephesians 1:22-23).

From the second section there is the record of the Suffering Servant to come. Isaiah 53 is a marvelous passage that should instill appreciation and gratitude in the hearts of all Christians for they have enjoyed the benefits of this suffering. Obviously a picture of Christ, He is previewed as the Man of sorrows, the Lamb to the slaughter, and the Offering for sin. For the good of all mankind, *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed"* (Isaiah 53:4-5).

A final marvel to be considered from Isaiah's prophecy is just that, his prophecies of the coming Messiah. Of the 333 prophecies in the Old Testament of the coming Messiah, a number of them are clearly pictured in Isaiah. Wilkin-son and Boa mention just a few with their fulfillments:

"7:14 (Matthew 1:22-23); 9:1-2 (Matthew 4:12-16); 9:6 (Luke 2:11; Ephesians 2:14-18); 11:1 (Luke 3:23,32; Acts 13:22-23); 11:2 (Luke 3:22); 28:16 (I Peter 2:4-6); 40:3-5 (Matthew 3:1-3); 42:1-4 (Matthew 12:15-21); 42:6 (Luke 2:29-32); 50:6 (Matthew 26:67; 27:26,30); 52:14 (Philippians 2:7-11); 53:3 (Luke 23:18; John 1:11; 7:5); 53:4-5 (Romans 5:6,8); 53:7 (Matthew 27:12-14; John 1:29; I Peter 1:18-19); 53:9 (Matthew 27:57-60); 53:12 (Mark 15:28); 61:1 (Luke 4:17-19,21)."

To Isaiah and the Holy Spirit who inspired him, man owes a debt of gratitude. It is through his written work perhaps more than any other's that we are able to look forward with hope to *"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God"* (Isaiah 40:1).