

Notes of an Address on Matthew 24: 45 - 25: 13

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You will observe that in the verses read there is no word about Jerusalem, Jews, or reference to the prophet Daniel, all of which are found in the preceding part, where we find the Lord using the disciples then present as a groundwork in speaking of those of the latter day. They were Jews though believers; and when God called those who were Gentiles, still they were Jews; and that state will be again. Now those who believe are one body, having to do with Christ and in heaven. The essence of Christianity is — "neither Jew nor Gentile." In the Old Testament, Jews were brought by grace into blessing by faith, and were to be the head of all nations. That remains to be accomplished, for now God has graven "Not my people" upon them. That is to be removed, and they treated not merely as son, but "firstborn." The first dominion will be Israel's, while all nations shall agree to it. A prefatory work will be in them as vessels of mercy. God is not now dealing with an earthly people at all. We believe in an earth-rejected, heavenly-glorified Christ, and are associated with Him there — "one spirit with the Lord," where "there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but *Christ* is all and in all."

Now then you will notice the Lord began His great prophecy by dealing with His disciples as they were, and carried it on on that ground — Jewish ground — passing over all of heaven and Christ above in Matt. 24, up to the verses read tonight, because he was speaking of Jewish believers. Next we have Christians, because Christ is now glorified; they are His body, while He is the risen Head on high. This state of things is not to last, though the blessing and glory of it does. God's purpose is to have an earthly people and earthly peoples enjoying His favour, and with Christ their righteousness. God's purposes embrace both heavenly and earthly objects. Christ will be King over all the earth, though He is not called so with reference to Christians now. He is never called King of the church, and though we find the expression "King of saints" in Rev. 15: 3, yet, every scholar knows it is a mistake, and the Revisers, on the ground of testimony of MSS., gave it up, substituting "King of nations," a title quoted from Jer. 10: 7, where Jehovah is called so — a remarkable expression to find in a Jewish prophet, but who was compelled by the Holy Ghost thus to bring out God's purposes. God's purpose is to have a godly Jewish remnant, prepared to welcome the Lord, as there was one gathered around Him when He spoke this prophecy. Between these two groups Christianity and the church come in.

There is nothing said about the church here, though it is mentioned in another part of the Gospel. You find much about it in the Acts, Epistles, and Revelation, in the last of which its close is given making way for Jews and believing Gentiles, for there will be a little remnant of God-fearing Gentiles, and then all nations blessed as you have it in the last part of the prophecy. Between the two comes in the present profession of Christ, not necessarily reality. You will observe a marked difference in this section; it is all parable. Parables are very general ; they apply equally to any country; they have no local root, and so are particularly suitable in showing that new thing which God was about to do.

First, then, have a servant — a faithful and wise servant. All Christians are called to be so, though some specially so. A servant in the house is called to provide good and suited meat for the house. Every Christian shares that in a way, though some are more suited for that work than others. Responsibility is according to privilege.

What constitutes a servant according to the mind of God? Waiting for the Master That is what exactly suits a servant, and the Lord Himself was the perfect model. Christ was the true Hebrew

Servant of Exodus 21. He served His time; the wife was given figuratively, and children also, but He was not content to go out. He loved the place of a servant for God's glory, and the service of poor wretched man. What place so good in this poor world? And then taken to the door-post and made a servant *for ever*. The Lord will never cease to be a servant. He is such now, though exalted. Now He is washing His disciples' feet, so often soiled by the mud of this world. Who is the great effectual Washer? Christ; and the Holy Ghost, too, has His part. Yet Christ is the Servant, and that because of perfect love. But for sin, no such service would be called for. Directly ruin takes place then the Saviour comes and takes that lowly part which no one else could take, and washes His disciples' feet. Now we ought to know the meaning of that, for each Christian needs the gracious Cleanser of our feet.

And when He comes and takes us to heaven, He is still the Servant. He comes forth to serve those whom He takes to heaven. Are we affected as we ought to be at the words? He said, "I am among you as he that serveth," when here; but even when eternity begins, and He delivers up the kingdom, He still keeps the place of subjection, because He never gives up manhood, and the place of man is service. He serves for ever. Thus He is, and is meant to be, the great pattern of the Christian. How is this answered to now? The Lord had to warn even apostles not to affect the grandees of this world — "neither be ye called benefactors," etc. — the complete contrast of Himself.

A "faithful servant" is one always waiting for Him; and He intimates that His coming would soon be forgotten, though the "evil servant" does not refer to it dogmatically. Denial of it is not supposed, but the evil servant says in his heart and tells by his conduct, "My lord delayeth his coming." The effect is everything unworthy — evil communications with evil people, assumption and presumption — the exact opposite of all in Christ. This is just the history of Christendom. In the second century there was no notion of the true place of Christ and Christianity and the hope of waiting for Him was lost. The Lord puts Himself into the parable — "Ye yourselves like men that wait for their lord." Like servants behind the door waiting for their Master, sure He is coming, but ignorant when. This is the only proper waiting for the Lord Jesus, carefully carried out in the Epistles, where the word is always "we which are alive," not they — "we," the servants behind the door waiting for the Lord. It is the unfaithful that say "they." Yet the apostle never said the Lord was coming in his day. It is all the exact truth, but the moment was concealed that we might be always waiting for Him. It is put very strongly here. There is only one servant; it is collective responsibility, and it is strikingly carried on to the evil servant. The collective testimony lost the hope, and when the hope was turned to Jewish from Christian, the foundation got lowered too; the evil servant was punished as a hypocrite, not merely as a man of the world.

The Lord next goes to another and different view — "ten" virgins are not "one." "Then shall the kingdom of heaven," etc. "Then," when judgment falls on the evil servant. He deals with other objects; it is another way of bringing out the utter failure of Christendom. The opening words of this chapter 25 are unique in the three parables which form the group. We find a general picture of Christendom from first to last. By Christendom I mean that which bears the name of Christ, whether truly or not. The kingdom of heaven is that new thing, not the kingdom on earth. If Christ is rejected in lower glory God brings in a higher one. If Jews reject, Gentiles are called. We have a picture here outside Judaism. All ten make a bright profession. All took torches (for the correct word is "torches," and quite distinct from the "lamps" in The Revelation). In eastern weddings the going in with the bride is always at night.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." This is the Christian hope again. From the start of Christendom the call was, Go forth to meet the Bridegroom from all below. If it was a Jew it was from the temple and its ritual, and that because an infinitely greater is there, and He the Bridegroom. Could God use a figure

more striking to the heart than that He who died for our sins should be the Bridegroom. "They went forth"; a heavenly character was stamped on their work.

If a person were a Christian in Otaheite, he "went forth" to meet the Bridegroom as much as if at Jerusalem. The Gentiles "went forth" as much as the Jews. If the hope were of another kind, — say the coming of the judge — you could not use the expression "went forth." No person could "go forth" to meet his judge. But if you look at the creeds of Christendom, all forget the Bridegroom, all look for the judge, the One that will put on the darkest of caps, and will sentence not for time but for eternity. Not a word of that here. Here the hope of the Christian is put in the parabolic form of meeting the Bridegroom. Not fighting unbelievers, but the influence of divine love in the person of Christ. five wise and five foolish — these show their folly by having no oil. The torch would burn brightly for a very little while without oil. All go forth, but the difference exists even from early days. John, James, and all the later Epistles assume persons of dubious character in the professing church. But all at first go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

The "tarrying" in scripture is never used to delay the coming of the Lord. All the parables are so constructed that those, who went forth at first, meet Him. But while He tarried "all slumbered and slept"; the heavenly hope was given up. The early fathers all lost it. Sleep implies no longer going forth. You could not suppose they slept on their legs. They must have turned in somewhere; they departed from the will of the Lord and gave up "going forth." It is true that Jewish believers will carry the gospel of the kingdom as they flee from the enemy, but this is not the attractive power of the love of Christ.

"At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom." That cry is going forth now, and has been going forth some seventy years. People at the end of the former century waked up, but the cry was, Behold the judge, not, Behold the Bridegroom. Here persons knowing His love, or ought to, were in peace, and instead of alarm, they go forth to meet Him. In the year 600 they woke up in a fright, but the judge did not come, and they went to sleep again. Then in 1100 there was a great scarce that the end of the world had come. They woke up, built cathedrals, did much to propitiate the coming judge, but the Judge did not come, and they went faster to sleep than ever in the dark ages. All was dark, but what has taken place? Not merely the coming of Christ, but the gospel of God has been brought out more simply and clearly than at the Reformation; even all the reformers (unless it were Zwingle) held baptismal regeneration. There is no such notion in the word of God. This is not referred to to slight them, but to show that the gospel could not be taught in its fulness in connection with the idea that life is communicated by baptism. No, all are lost, and all require to be saved. Besides this, peace with God, redemption, new relationship, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are brought out and keep the heart from being afraid. Instead of going to meet the judge, if you know the gospel you know Christ bore the judgment and more. He loves me, yes, better than the angels. When the cry went forth, God wrought that hearts might go forth bounding to meet the Lord Jesus, knowing we are immeasurably dear to Him. This made the difference plain. The foolish virgins found no oil, and set to work in great earnestness to get it, as now in Christendom. People who once were card players and fox-hunters are now great for early Communion and outward forms. It is all an effort to get the oil, as there are frequent requests for those they know to be pious to pray for them, as did Simon Magus, instead of buying for themselves "without money" and "without price." And the solemn part is — the same spirit is found in all denominations!

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