

PLOT TWIST

"HERE COMES THE GROOM"

MATTHEW 25:1-13

This Week's Core Competency

Single-mindedness - I focus on God and his priorities for my life. Matthew 6:33, *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you as well.*

Perhaps you have never heard of Dr. Michael J. Burry. He was an unknown physician, at least until recently. Burry was one of the few people who bothered to investigate the booming stock market prior to its crash in 2008. What he discovered was the banks were making loans to people who were unlikely to pay them back and yet declared they were stable loans. They did this far too frequently, and auctioned off these bad loans to other investors. When more and more people began missing their payments, all the investors began to realize the loans they had invested in were not worth what they thought. This resulted in a burst of the housing bubble, which had a devastating effect on the U.S. and world economy for years to follow.

When Dr. Burry assessed the situation, prior to the crash, he realized it was impossible for the market to sustain the growth. He concluded that sooner or later people would begin defaulting on their loans, and when that happened, the market would plummet. As a result, he looked for a way to profit from the impending crash. Without getting into the technicalities, Burry basically bet against the market, and he bet big. He even allowed other investors to join in his fund that was betting that the stock market would crash, and when it did, he personally made \$100 million and his investors made \$700 million.

Burry is a brilliant physician, and a wealthy one at that. However, you didn't have to be brilliant to

see that the economy was going to collapse in 2008. The difference between those who survived the crash and those who lost big was their preparedness. Those who were prepared saw the signs; they knew how to recognize what was happening and they made adjustments. Those who lost big simply ignored the signs and continued partying like it was 1999.

The lesson to be learned from this story closely parallels the lesson we will study in Matthew 25:1-13. Jesus was speaking of the end times when he told this parable to explain the importance of the preparedness or readiness. It seems that those who are ready are those who are purposeful about how they live. Our Core Competency speaks to this principle.

Jesus spoke about ten virgins in this parable-five are wise and five are foolish. The wise ones were prepared. They knew what could come and they knew what to expect. They had a goal in mind (namely to be ready to receive the groom) and they took the steps necessary to fulfill it. On the other hand, the five foolish virgins were not prepared for the groom. They had not thought ahead, and had failed to bring extra oil for their lamps. The result for the foolish virgins was not simply being left out of the party, but they also suffered disassociation from the groom himself.

The terms "single-minded" and "whole-hearted" go hand in hand. We speak often of doing things whole-heartedly or with all of our hearts. When we profess this, we are saying that nothing will get in the way of us doing this. This in essence is single-mindedness. It is easy to claim, but difficult to live.

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It is even more difficult to make the things of God our single priority in a world that is vying for our attention from all sides. The distractions are innumerable: get rich, be your own boss, take multiple vacations, invest, enjoy life, ensure your retirement, etc. None of these are necessarily bad, but they can be if they become our single-minded focus and replace a focus on God and his kingdom.

It is all the more crucial that we, his Church, be single-minded in these times. We need to wake up to the fact that all around us there are signs of the impending return of Christ and the sad reality is that many of us are not ready. Many of us are hard at work securing our own private kingdoms and ignoring the fact that soon, Jesus will return. When that time comes, will you be ready like the wise virgins were, or caught off guard as the foolish virgins were? Have you prepared for the Lord's return by putting your faith in him and eagerly awaiting his blessings, or will you be ashamed of the time you've wasted when he comes on the clouds?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 24:1-13

1 "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. 5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

7 "Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

9 " 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'

12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- *Draw a box around any indicator of *time* in this passage.
- *Underline any word or term that indicates an *event* or a *place*.
- *Circle words that indicate *contrast* (but, rather, not, etc.).

- *Double underline any *application* that you find.
- *Put a parentheses around any *imperative* clause (i.e., any command that is given).

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. To what time do the events alluded to in Matthew 25:1-13 refer? (See 24:1-31.)
2. What does the *coming of the bridegroom* represent?
3. The passage opens, "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be *like* . . ." What's the point of *comparison* between the kingdom of heaven and the ten virgins—how is the one *like* the other?
4. What does the wedding banquet represent—heaven or the kingdom? Explain.
5. If the coming of Christ entails the *rapture* followed by the *glorious appearing*, to which does this parable refer? Explain.
6. Who do the ten virgins represent?
7. What does this parable indicate will happen to those represented by the five *foolish* virgins?
8. The wise virgins do not share their oil with the foolish virgins. Explain why this is noted and its significance.
9. **Discussion:** Given that this passage points to a future time, Talk about the takeaway that we can apply today.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Disaster tends to devastate those who are ill-prepared. Those who are prepared for any situation, rarely suffer as much as the ill-prepared, if at all. The sad reality is that in spite of God's revealed word about the end times, many fail to prepare for the return of the King. Many people have grown tired of waiting for the kingdom which Christ will establish. Passages about the end times and heaven in general are abstract and irrelevant for many believers. I suspect that many Christians will be caught "sleeping" when the end draws near. While we don't know how much time we have, nor when Christ will return, we do know a great deal about the future and to not do anything in light of what we know will be devastating.

The context of Matthew 25:1-13 is important. To whom is Jesus speaking and why? Matthew 24:1-3 sets the scene. In these verses we see that Jesus' words about the future destruction of the temple pique the disciples' curiosity. In verse 3 the disciples approach Jesus privately with this question: "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" Let's dissect this question into two parts: (1) When will this happen (namely the destruction of the temple)? and (2) What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age (when will Jesus return to earth and begin the messianic age)?

Matthew 24 and 25 contain Jesus' answer to the disciples' question. Understanding this will help prevent misinterpretation. Jesus is speaking here about future events. The end of the age that the disciples referred to here was the same end of the age that Jesus had spoken about four other times in the book: Matthew 13:39, 40, 49; 28:20. "By 'the end of the age' Jesus meant the end of the present age that will consummate in his second coming and a judgment of living unbelievers" (Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* [Galaxie Software, 2003], Mt 24:3).

The disciples' questions indicate they believed three things would happen when Jesus returned: First, Jerusalem would be destroyed. Second, Jesus would return and end the present age. Third, Jesus would establish his kingdom. Constable argues that the disciples would have thought this way because of the prophecy of Zechariah 14:1-11 (Constable, Mt 24:3). These chapters are a sermon called the Olivet Discourse.

In the first part of this sermon (24:4-29) Jesus

talks about the signs that precede his return. Then in verse 30, he describes his actual return "on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."

It might be helpful to have a grasp on a timeline of end-time events: The present age is often called the church age. The next event on the horizon is the rapture, the coming of Christ for his church, which will be followed by seven years of tribulation culminating in Christ's return marking the end of the tribulation and the present age. At that time, Jesus will establish his 1000-year earthly reign over Israel and the nations called the millennium (Rev 20:1-4). Hence, the events Jesus describes in the Olivet Discourse pertain to events culminating in the establishment of that kingdom.

Given the certainty of the events described in chapter 24, Jesus tells his disciples (and by implication the nation Israel) how to prepare for the coming kingdom. With that in mind, Matthew 25:1-13, the parable of the ten virgins, is addressed to Israel, the nation that rejected Christ at his first coming. The ten virgins represent the Jews who will be experiencing the tribulation prior to Jesus' return. "The context clearly points to that event (24:3, 14, 27, 30, 39, 44, 51). The judgment of the Gentiles (sheep and goats) will occur when the Lord returns (25:31-46). Also at His glorious return, Israel will be judged as a nation (Ezek. 20:33-44; Zech. 13:1)" (Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 79-80.)

The parable does not mention the bride; just the bridegroom. This leaves a little ambiguity as to whether the church is the bride that returns with the groom or if it is not relevant. It is important to note that if this is indeed Christ's return following the rapture of the church, then we, the church, will be with him at that time. If the church is raptured prior to the tribulation, then the church will return with Christ because it was raptured to be by his side earlier. When Christ returns, he will determine who enters his kingdom. The parable indicates that those who are prepared enter, i.e., attend the banquet, while those who are not are excluded from attending. While part of Israel is ready for the return of Christ, even given the clear signs of the times, part of Israel will not be spiritually ready for Christ's return and will not enter the kingdom.

The ones who were ready for the return of the king were the ones who had seen the signs and had brought extra oil for the lamps. The wise women

represent those who have trusted in Jesus as the Messiah. The foolish ones were waiting, but had not prepared for his coming; which is to say they had not believed in Jesus as Messiah. The key to this parable is the preparation of the virgins.

You may agree that this passage is talking about Israel, or you may believe that it is talking about all people who will be on earth when Christ returns, but in either case the question is: how do we apply this passage today? The answer lies in what is revealed about God and the consistency with what we know of God throughout Scripture. God has given more than enough evidence that he is not

only returning, but that those who have sought to invest in his kingdom will be blessed and those who have invested in their own personal kingdoms will want for blessing. We are weeks away from celebrating the birth of Christ. Christmas is a painful reminder for many messianic Jews that their people were repeatedly told that Christ was coming the first time and they weren't ready. Jesus has already proved once that the prophecies about him coming to Earth were true. The prophecies about his return a second time are just as evident. I encourage you to prepare your hearts and your lives for the return of Christ.

The Message of the Passage

The end of our time on this earth will come swiftly, so invest in things of eternal value and prepare yourself spiritually as if this day is your last.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 *living questions* to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living questions*:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **At that time** In the rapture of the Church, we will be caught up to heaven to be with Christ (1Th 4:16, 17). Meeting with Christ in the air is different than Christ returning to earth. He does not return to earth at that time, though from that point on we are with him. The events in Matthew 24 describe the time when Jesus returns and thus this is a completely different event than the rapture. Matthew 24 describes an event that is preceded by signs, whereas the Rapture comes without warning. The return of Christ will be preceded by signs though they will be ignored by many. (Note: There is a great deal of debate about these passages. Some take Matthew 24 and 1Th 4:17 to be describing the same event, which affect the interpretation of Matthew 25:1-13.)

v. 1 **the kingdom of heaven** To say that the "kingdom of heaven is like. . ." does not mean that the following parable describes the kingdom of God in its entirety. The better approach to understand this phrase when seen throughout the gospels is to see they speak of an aspect of the kingdom. The initiation of the kingdom is in view here" (Constable, Matt 25:1). The banquet that is seen here is most likely representative of the kingdom that Christ will establish at his return. Revelation 19 and 20 are helpful to see some more of the details surrounding the end of the tribulation and the commencement of the millennial kingdom. What is clear in both Revelation and Matthew is that when Christ returns to earth he will initiate his reign on earth, namely the kingdom of heaven. This will be a physical reign on this earth for a literal 1000 years.

v. 1 **ten virgins** The context is our aid as we seek to decipher who they represent. Immediately following this parable is the parable of the sheep and the goats. Jesus speaks of the fact that when he returns he will separate the sheep from goats. This passage indicates a judgment of the nations (more than just Israel), which has led many commentators to believe that the beginning of the passage, i.e. the ten virgins, speaks of a judgment of just Israel. This also aligns with other parts of Scripture that speak of a judgment of just Israel immediately after the return of Christ (Ez. 20:33-44; Zech 13:1).

v. 5 **fell asleep** "However, the reference to sleep here and rising in v. 7 are literal, not metaphors for death and resurrection (contra Schenk). No fault is attached to the wise for falling asleep" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33B, *Matthew 14-28*, 729).

v. 6 **meet the bridegroom** In ancient times weddings were quite the ordeal. "First, the parents arranged the marriage with the consent of the bride and groom. Second, the couple passed an engagement period of many months in which it would become clear, hopefully, that the bride was a virgin. Third, on the day of the wedding the groom would go to the bride's house to claim his bride from her parents. Friends of his would accompany him. Fourth, the marriage ceremony would take place at the bride's home. Fifth, on the evening of the day of the wedding the groom would take his bride home. This involved a nighttime procession through the streets. Sixth, the bride and groom would consummate their marriage at the groom's home the night of the wedding ceremony. Seventh, there would be a banquet that would often last as long as seven days. This often took place at the groom's home" (Constable, Matt. 25:1).

v. 9 **not enough** The fact that the wise virgins were not willing to share should not be read into too much. Some commentators take the oil to represent the Holy Spirit (Constable, 25:2-5), but it would be taken too far to say that there is not enough Spirit. The point is that the wise virgins had prepared and had oil and the foolish virgins had to prepare themselves prior to the groom's arrival.

v. 10 **door was shut** The foolish virgins are left out and the door is shut. When they come to the door and ask to be let in, the bridegroom refuses to let them enter, because he doesn't know them. This sounds very much like Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." The shut door indicates an exclusion from the kingdom of heaven and eternal punishment.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

The custom of the day was for the bridesmaids to have their lamps ready as they waited with the bride for the bridegroom to come and escort them all to the wedding ceremony. In this case, the bridesmaids waited a long time before he arrived. The bridesmaids fell asleep and some ran out of oil. When the bridegroom came to get them, five of the bridesmaids lit their lamps and were ready to go. The other five did not bring extra oil and so their lamps were out. Since they were not ready they were not allowed to attend the wedding. Jesus' story communicates the importance of being ready when he returns. As parents it is easy for us to put off the spiritual training of our little ones and sometimes ourselves. We think there are more pressing matters and that we will get to it eventually. Some of us even neglect spiritual conversations with our kids because we think it should be their choice when they are older. Parents, just as we teach our kids to prepare for bed by brushing their teeth or prepare for school by doing their homework, we should be preparing them spiritually for Christ's return. Though no one knows the day, it is sure to happen. I'm praying that you and I will spend the appropriate time and energy to ensure our kids know Jesus and are ready when he comes for his bride.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Mt 25:1-13

1. Why does Jesus call the five bridesmaids foolish?
2. What happened to them when the bridegroom came?
3. What is the message of the parable? (verse 13)

What Do You Think

1. How do you think the 5 foolish bridesmaids felt when they realized they couldn't get into the banquet?
2. Our hearts need to be ready for Jesus when he comes. How are you ready?

What R U Going To Do

Once we have trusted Jesus as Savior, we can continue to prepare for his coming by getting to know him better. Put an "X" next to the days you read your Bible. ___Sun
___Mon ___Tues ___Wed
___Thur ___Fri ___Sat

Core Comp

Single-Mindedness - I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

Memory Verse

Psalm 119:16 - *I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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