

THE LATTER PARABLES OF JESUS

Message 20

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

INTRO: In this message I want to review where we have been and seek to tie together any the loose ends and put all these parables in their prophetic context. We began with four messages of general introductions, and now we want to make a general conclusion to the series. Possibly, some day I'll cover one more set of parables, which would be what I would view as the early parables of Jesus. You see, in looking at these latter parables one might ask, why do they not cover the Church age? And the answer to that is, I believe, that Jesus gave eight parables that deal with the Church age. Most of those are found in Matthew 13 and the messages to those are available on sermonaudio.

In these parables we have covered 13 parables and we will take an overview this morning of what they deal with. And so I will leave all that for subject this morning, the general conclusions to the latter parables. Here I want to review the four messages that gave the introduction to the subject of prophecy and these parables.

Then we want to give these 13 parables in brief, to give us an overview of the whole subject matter of these parables. Many years ago, as a young man, I signed up to work on a forest fire. I was a logger in those days and we were off for spring break which usually lasted about 2 months. And one day I saw the smoke of a fire rise to the north of us and I went into town and signed up. The foreman assigned me to go with several natives to put out a spot-fire. That is a fire they have seen from a chopper that has started across the fireguard. A fireguard is a trail cleared by bull dozers to contain the fire,

Well, one of these natives was an older man and the rangers had verbally explained to him where the fire was. How he could find it is still beyond me. Well, we followed the fire-guard for quite some distance. And when we came to a higher point he stopped and he stood there for a good long while, and then without a word, he started out into unburned timber. And when we had crossed a draw and we were up on the other side he stopped with a puzzled look on his face. He had seen a few puffs of smoke and now he thought we should be there, and there was no smoke. And then, sure enough, not far away he saw the smoke again. It was an old stump, I think, that was smoldering underneath, and in some time it might have started another fire.

And what this native had done when he stood on that higher place was take an overview and from that overview he had seen points that he would recognize once we were in the woods. An overview sees the whole picture. When he took us back, I recognized several places and I knew that we were going out the same way we had gone in. And this morning we want stand up on a hill, so to speak, and take an overview of where we have gone and see it in light of the lay of the land around it.

III. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS TO THE LATTER PARABLES

A. General Introductions

Let me briefly review the first four messages. We will take but a moment or two. We spent four messages preparing ourselves for this study of the latter parables. We introduced the whole subject of parables; what they are, what their parts are, and the rules for interpreting. We looked at the concept of the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. Then we looked at prophecy, what it is and what kinds there are, and the time elements in prophecy. We then gave guidelines for interpreting prophecy, because much of these parables is prophetic. After this we considered the purpose of prophecy, and that took us four messages.

B. The Latter Parables Of Jesus

1. The laborers in the vineyard

Now we want to briefly review the 13 parables that we covered as well. We then began to look at the parables, the first of which was the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew 20:1-15. You might remember that in this parable Jesus is nearing Jericho, on His last trip to Jerusalem before He is crucified. And also, in each parable we first read, or had the parable read. We then looked at the setting, the interpretation and the application of each parable. I won't give you all that. I will now just give a brief overview of each parable.

The parable of the laborers in the vineyard, as I interpret it, gave us the 12 hours of OT history. As we go along, I will show you this on overheads. So we'll take overhead 1 at this point (**OVERHEAD 1**). The disciples came along in the eleventh hour. Jesus gave

this parable on His way to Jerusalem on the far side of the Jordan River before they got to Jericho. The parable is of a vineyard owner, who, in the busy harvest season hired workers throughout the 12 hour day. You will remember how the vineyard owner sought workers throughout those eleven hours. You will remember that in the eleventh hour, it was the disciples and those who believed in Christ that were represented. And the Lord said, the first will be last, and the last will be first. The Jews, who were chosen first, will come last, and the disciples and those who followed, including all of us Gentiles, the Church, are first in the kingdom of heaven. We will be raptured to heaven and then God's program for the Jew will continue in the tribulation and here they will come last.

2. The Parable of the minas - pounds

The next parable took place on the road to Jerusalem after He left Jericho. This is recorded in Luke 19:12-17. It is the parable of the pounds or minas. (OVERHEAD 2) A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom for himself. He called His servants and delivered ten minas and said, "Do business until I return." After that the citizens said, "We won't have this man rule over us." That is a prophecy of the rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel.

Well, when the landowner returned, he called those to whom he had given the minas to come for reckoning. And the first one's mina had earned 10 minas and the Lord said, "Well done. Have authority over 10 cities." The second one had earned five and he was set over five cities. But the last one made excuse for himself and said, "I put the money away to keep it safe for you. Here it is." The end result of this kind of servant will be is that he will meet the Lord at judgment, and Luke 19:27 says, "Bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me."

3. The fig tree cursed

Our next parable took place in Jerusalem. Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, having come from Jericho, and it is just before Jesus is crucified. It is the parable of the fig tree in Matthew 21:18-22. (OVERHEAD 3) You will

remember that one morning as they were going from Bethany to Jerusalem Jesus was hungry, and there was a fig tree with leaves, so He went to pick some figs, only to find it fruitless and He cursed the tree. In my interpretation I said I believed the fig tree represented Israel, and Israel as a nation was cursed for the duration of the Church age.

4. The Two Sons

Moving on to Matthew 21:28-32, we had the parable of the two sons. The first three parables were given to the disciples. (OVERHEAD 4) The next three now are addressed to the Israel's religious leaders. In this parable Jesus is telling them that because they claimed to obey God, but rejected John the Baptist's teaching when he came, so they, like the second son who said he would go work in the vineyard but did not, would not enter the kingdom. But the second son, representing the despised tax collectors and harlots, and also us, the Gentiles; who said he would not go but afterward repented and went, so they would enter the kingdom of heaven while the religious leaders did not. This is a horrible proposition for the Jewish leaders. It is enough to make them pursue efforts to crucify Him.

5. The landowner with the vineyard

This brings us to the fifth parable, the parable of the landowner with the vineyard. It is found in Matthew 21:33-41 and occurs in Mark and Luke as well. (OVERHEAD 5) There was a landowner who decided to go into growing grapes. So he planted the vineyard, built a fence around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower in it. He then leased it to share-croppers and went into a far country. When vintage time came he sent servants to bring his share of the crop back to him. But the vinedressers either killed these servants or sent them back empty. Last of all he sent his son, and they killed him.

Now it is easy to tell how this refers to Israel and the kingdom God gave to them in the OT and how they killed the prophets time after time or persecuted them. And this parable is prophetic at the time Jesus gave it. It prophesied His death just a few days before it happened. And Jesus asked the Jewish religious leaders,

"What will the landowner do when he comes to reckon with those share-croppers?" And they said, "He will destroy those share-croppers and lease it out to others." And the picture is this, Israel will be rejected, and the kingdom will be given to others.

6. The king' wedding invitation

In Matthew 22:1-14, we next have the parable of the king's wedding invitation. A certain king arranged a wedding for his son and he prepared everything and then invited the guests he wanted at the wedding. But they, one after another, made excuses why they could not come. The king then sent his armies, destroyed their city and invited other guests.

Now I gave the interpretation of this parable as God's invitation to Israel in history past. (OVERHEAD 6) And time after time they made excuses for not coming to Him. And they treated this invitation lightly and even killed some of the servants that were sent to invite them to the wedding. That is what Israel did to the prophets in the OT. And finally the king got tired of this and He destroyed their city. No doubt that refers to Titus' destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

And I believe the command to the servants to go into the highways and invite whoever wishes to come, to come to the wedding, is a picture, not of the Gentile Church age, but of the call to the world through Israel in the tribulation. And if you read Revelation 7, you will find that they have one of the most successful evangelistic campaigns ever undertaken.

But in the end, when the king comes to see the wedding guests he finds those who don't have a wedding garment. That is the goats of Matthew 25, as I interpret this. The evidence for that is that in Matthew 22:13 it says, "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

7. The fig tree

We come now to our second fig tree parable, but in an entirely different context. You will remember when we went through the parables I gave you this overhead

(OVERHEAD 7). This fig tree parable is found in the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24-25. These two chapters are prophetic of the rapture and the second coming.

What the two fig tree parables have in common is that both picture the nation of Israel. The cursing of the fig tree pictures Israel as being set aside as a nation under God. The present fig tree, the budding fig tree, pictures the tree that was cursed; but now, once more, it is growing leaves. This time the tree will bear fruit. And in this parable the Lord is saying that when you see the tree grow leaves once more, you know my coming is near. Well, that event happened in 1948, 3 years before I was born. The video we watched last Sunday showed David Ben Gurion signing the declaration of the nation of Israel and I told you I view that as the most important single event since Christ ascended to heaven.

You will remember that the disciples had asked Jesus three questions. First, when will these things be? And He answered that in 24:4-31. Then they asked, "What will be the sign of Your coming?" (OVERHEAD 8) And He answered that in 24:42, beginning with this fig tree parable, up to 25:30. Now I have no doubt that the budding of this fig tree is prophetic of Israel becoming a nation again. Ezekiel 37 is very plain that when this fig tree begins to bud, the Jews are in an unsaved state, as it is today.

8. The servants and the porter

We took parable number 8 from Mark 13:33-37. You might turn to it. We go not to number 9 (OVERHEAD 9) Our parables from this point on until the last one will be exhortations to watch for the return of Christ. In my understanding, this parable gives the setting to the next two parables in Matthew (read as follows).

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the

morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

Over and over again, in these parables, we are exhorted to watch, and what are we to watch? Our spiritual lives! In this context Luke lists three things that weigh the heart down and from which he warns us; carousing, drunkenness, and the cares of this life. Eating and drinking and the cares of this life, all legitimate things, can derail us from our spiritual interests. Therefore, watch! And what is the major concern? If we do not watch, we might fall asleep, and we will miss out on the catching up of the Church!

9. The master and the thief

Along the same lines now, Matthew gives the warning to watch from the master and the thief. (**OVERHEAD 10**) This parable is recorded in Matthew. 24:42-44. Turn to it (read as follows), "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

10. The two servants

Matthew follows this parable up immediately with the parable of the two servants in Matthew 24:45-51 (**OVERHEAD 11**). I introduced a new concept to you here. It is that the Lord deals with the faithful servant before the tribulation, and the unfaithful servant after the tribulation. The faithful servant, the believing servant who is ready, is caught up with the Church to meet the Lord in the air before the tribulation begins. The unfaithful servant will be judged at the sheep and goat judgment at the end of the tribulation.

11. The ten virgins

All that brought us then to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 (**OVERHEAD 12**). Five were wise and five were foolish. In my interpretation, the wise represent the true Church and are caught up to

heaven, the unwise, representing professing Christians, meet the Lord in judgment at the end of the tribulation and are sent to hell.

12. The talents

The last parable having to do with the disciple's second question, "What will be the sign of your coming", in my interpretation is Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents (**OVERHEAD 13**). You will remember the kingdom of heaven was likened to a man traveling to a far country. And he delivered his goods to three servants. To one he gave 3 talents, to another 2 and to the third, 1. You will also remember that the first two doubled their income and the master, when he reckoned with them made them rulers according to their industriousness. But the last servant laid the talent away so that he might keep it safe for his master, whom he perceived to be a harsh master. And of this last servant, it says that he was cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And here is the picture I gave of them. The faithful servants represent the Church and are caught up to heaven. The unfaithful servant represents the professing church, and they are cast into hell at the end of the tribulation.

13. The sheep and goat judgment

That brings us then to the last parable, the sheep and goat parable found in Matthew 25:31-45 (**OVERHEAD 14**). You will remember that in my interpretation, this parable is given in answer to the disciple's third question: What will be the sign of the end of the age? I mentioned that there are two main ages; this age, and the age to come. This age will end at the end of the tribulation. That will bring in the true new age.

And in this parable we saw what it will be like at the close of the tribulation. We were given two pictures in Matthew 25:31-32a. The first was of Christ coming in the clouds, and we discussed that. The second was of Him sitting on the throne, ready to judge those left alive at this time. And I said that in my view, all those who are not believers or not even professing believers will be killed. The wrath of God will be

poured out in full. The antichrist, the false prophet, the devil with his hordes will be cast into hell. And now we are left with only believers and professing believers.

These two groups will then be separated on the basis of what they are, sheep or goats. They will then be judged on the basis of what they have done. The true believers will inherit the kingdom and the professing believers will be cast into hell. And on earth, we are left now with only true believers. These are all the OT saints; the Church. These two groups are there with resurrected bodies. The other group that will be there is those who were true Christians in the tribulation. And they have not been resurrected and they will repopulate the millennial earth.

C. The Prophetic Context Of The Latter Parables

Intro: So, we have looked at the general introductions we covered in the first four messages. Then we have taken an overview of the latter parables, and now we want to set all of this in its prophetic context. We are going to look at the preceding context, the present context and the proceeding context, or that which immediately follows. What I want to spend most of the time we have left on is the events that will immediately follow the sheep and goat judgment.

1. The Preceding Context

We begin then with the preceding context. You see, Jesus did not just haphazardly give parables. There was a purpose in how He gave them (**OVERHEAD 15**). The parables we have studied began by Jesus telling the disciples that throughout OT time He had sought for workers in His kingdom. And in these parables He told them how they had rejected His messengers in the past, and that through their disobedience, they, who had been first would be last. He shared with them that because they had mistreated His servants, and because they would kill God's Son, their city would be destroyed, and their nation would be set aside.

Well, Jesus was crucified and resurrected and then He ascended to heaven and the Church age began in about 32 AD. Some 40 years later Jerusalem was destroyed and the nation of Israel was never again prominent until 1948.

2. The Present Context

That brings us to the present context which is now. Today we are at 2016 (OVERHEAD 16). Today we can read of the history of Israel's setting aside. We can read how in history, the land of Israel lay barren and was unproductive. We can read of the 1800's, how there came a hunger for a Jewish homeland and how the Hebrew language began to be restored. We can read of Theodore Herzle's efforts in preparation for a Jewish national homeland. We can read of 1948, and how a nation was born in a day. We have seen in recent history both the budding and the growth of the leaves the fig tree of the nation of Israel. We have not yet seen the spiritual fruit. That will come, but it will come at a high price in the tribulation.

3. The Proceeding Context

We want to now look at the proceeding context. By proceeding context I mean that which immediately follows the real events spoken of by parable in the parable of the sheep and goats. Now let me show you where the sheep and goat judgment happens in my understanding of it (OVERHEAD 17).

And here is our question: What happens right after this? Do we know? Does the Bible say anything other than that 1,000 years of peace follow? I want to show you what will happen within a year after the sheep and goat judgment, which I have called the proceeding context.

Let me draw the scene as I see it, for you one more time. I want to give you a picture of the population on earth at this time. Let me begin by telling you who won't be there. You see, there is a sense in which the situation at this time is better than it was in the Garden of Eden. True, the marks left by war and the signs of death are still in the land as we will see. But in light of all that, at this time, first, there is no devil and there are no demons there. That was not true in the Garden of Eden. This is truly incredible. Second, the antichrist and the false prophet are no longer a threat to come, as they are today. They have come and are gone. Third, there are no atheists, no cults, no Muslims, no Catholics, (I mean true Catholics), no Budhists not even professing Christians who are not real Christians will be there. There will

be ex-Muslims, ex-Catholics, ex-atheists etc... who have truly been converted, but there are no non-Christians around.

Now let me show you who is there. First, the Lord Jesus Christ will be there. And second, all true believers who have ever lived will be there. And these true believers will be made up of all the OT believers. Turn to Luke 13 (read 24-28). We are told here of the goats in the sheep and goat judgment. And the goats are cast into hell at the end of the tribulation. And it says, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

You see, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will be there. That is not all. You might wish to read Hebrews 11 for all these will be there too. Then all the Church age believers will be there. Now all these are resurrected people who are never subject to dying or ever becoming lost again. But then there will be believers who are there in their original physical state. Luke 13:29 says, "And they (true believers) shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

So the resurrected OT saints are there, and the resurrected Church age believers are there, and the unresurrected Christians of the tribulation are there. And it is this last group that will repopulate the earth in the millennium. Those are all the people who will be there. All is holiness to the Lord! It is amazing, is it not? Is this life worth this?

So here is the picture I see at the end of the sheep and goat judgment. All over the world, there is not one person left alive. All living people are gathered in Israel. All the people left on earth at this point are standing on the edge of the true new age. At creation, mankind began with one couple. After the flood, a new world began with one family. Now a new age will begin with a great number of all true believers!

But, we are not quite in the new age yet, as I see it. In my interpretation at least, the sheep and goat judgment is the sign of the end of this age. We are not there yet. It is a sign that we are near.

So go now with me now to Daniel 12 (read 1-4). In those verses it speaks of a resurrection. When we read of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob earlier, they are among those who experience this resurrection at the end of the tribulation. But note in verse 4 that Daniel did not understand all this. He was to seal the book until the time of the end. We are there today.

Now look at verse 5-10 (read). When it speaks here of a time, times and half a time, that is the last 3 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years of the tribulation. And it says many will be purified in that time. Those, I believe are the sheep of Matthew 25.

But now look at verses 11-13 (read). In verse 11 it speaks of the time when the daily sacrifice is taken away. For our prayer meeting folk, that is described in 2 Thessalonians 2, when the man of sin sits in the temple and declares himself to be God. It is also the exact middle of the tribulation.

That brings us to a very important prophecy for our present subject. Look at verse 11 again (read). What are the 1,290 days? Well, the last 3 and $\frac{1}{2}$ years are 1260 days. And here we have 30 days past the end of the tribulation. What will happen in those days? Well, I believe the preparation for this judgment of Matthew 25, the setting up of the throne, and the gathering of all the people and the sheep and goat judgment will happen in those days.

Now let me show you what happens during this time. Go with me to Ezekiel 39 (read 1-8). Prophecy students are disagreed as to when this battle takes place that is described in 38-39. I view it as the battle of Armageddon. And when this battle is over, the sheep and goat judgment will take place. And I believe it is after that, that the rest of this chapter will happen. Look at verses 9-16 (read). The vultures will pick the bones clean, and whenever people find a bone, they will put a mark there and they will be cleaned up. All the marks of war will be removed. Well, you can read of the invitation to the birds to come have a feast in Revelation 19. You might wish to read the rest of this chapter for yourselves.

But that is not all. If you would read Ezekiel say from chapter 34-to the end of 39, you would find described what has happened from, say the 1900's to the time

after the sheep and goat judgment. You would find Israel revived as a nation and the land beginning to bring fruit as it is today. But after chapter 39, and the battle of Gog and Magog, you would come to chapter 40 and on. And if you would read from here on through the rest of the book, you would read of the temple that will be constructed beginning, shortly after the sheep and goat judgment.

Now last Sunday we watched a wonderful video on Israel and we were shown how the Jews are preparing the utensils and preparing priests to serve in the temple that is to be rebuilt. The temple that will be built before or during the tribulation is not the temple spoken of here. This is a most incredible building and it is described in the last chapters of Ezekiel and it has some significant changes from all previous temples. And this temple will last longer than all the previous temples Israel built.

But before we close, we must go to Daniel 12 for one more verse. Notice now verse 12 (read), "Blessed is he who waits and comes to the 1,335th day." And I say, "Yes! Blessed, very blessed is that man!" Why? Well, I believe he will watch the inauguration of the King of Kings as King over the whole earth. And he will experience the inauguration of the millennium!!! If I am correct, it is a most incredible day! And who is this blessed man? It includes all the OT saints; all the Church age saints, and all the tribulational saints. It is the saved of all prior ages!

CONCL: And so, we bring this series to a close. I have preached through the parables that foretell the Church age in a previous series. They are available on sermonaudio. We have now covered the latter parables, and as you can see, they were not haphazardly given. There was a plan to it. And maybe, Lord willing I will cover the early parables some day, because I believe they are the forerunners to all the others.

The sheep and goat judgment is the last parable Jesus gave, and it brings us to the New Age, when He will rule over this earth. There follow 1,000 glorious years. Do you get weary of this pilgrimage sometimes? Well, not too long from now, it will be worth it all.

-Song: When We See Christ, It will be worth it all

Oft times the day seems long, our trials hard to bear,
 We're tempted to complain, to murmur and despair;

But Christ will soon appear to catch His Bride away,
All tears forever over in God's eternal day.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.

Sometimes the sky looks dark with not a ray of light,
We're tossed and driven on , no human help in sight;
But there is one in heav'n who knows our deepest care,
Let Jesus solve your problem - just go to Him in pray'r.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.

Life's day will soon be o'er, all storms forever past,
We'll cross the great divide, to glory, safe at last;
We'll share the joys of heav'n - a harp, a home, a crown,
The tempter will be banished, we'll lay our burden down.

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.