

15. Matthew

*Matthew 19; Rewards in the millennial kingdom (19:27-30)

- Rewards in the millennial kingdom are described in this passage (19:27-30). Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (19:28).

*Matthew 24-25; Jesus discusses the last days, signs of the end of the age, abomination of desolation, great tribulation, second coming of Jesus (chapters 24 and 25; refer to similar passages; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 17:20-37, 21:5-38)

- "Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him. And He said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down.' As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (24:1-3). The first part of the question, "Tell us, when will these things happen?" is concerning the destruction of the temple. Jesus' reply focuses mainly on end-time events, indicating that the destruction of Herod's temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. was perhaps only a foreshadow of the future destruction of the Tribulation temple (refer to Luke 21). The last part of the question, "what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" must have been divinely inspired because the disciples didn't really understand that Jesus was going to die, rise again and return to earth a second time.

- "And Jesus answered and said to them, 'See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, "I am the Christ," and will mislead many. You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs'" (24:4-8). The first thing Jesus says is a warning, "See to it that no one misleads you", for there will be many false Christs and false prophets that will mislead many. This warning is repeated several times in this chapter, emphasizing its importance (24:4-5, 11, 23-26). Just as birth pangs become more frequent and more severe as time progresses, so will wars, famines and earthquakes become more frequent and severe as the end of the age approaches.

- "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (24:9-14).

- "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather" (24:15-28).

- The antichrist (beast) will make a firm covenant (peace treaty) with the Jewish people in Israel, which marks the beginning of the seven-year Great Tribulation. At the midpoint of the Tribulation, the beast will put a stop to sacrifices and offerings in the newly built Tribulation temple. He will take his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). The beast will then wage war against Jewish people and believers in Christ throughout the world. Israeli Jews are instructed to immediately flee to the mountains when they witness the abomination of desolation. God will miraculously protect this Jewish remnant during the second half of the Tribulation by providing a safe haven in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6, 14). Many verses of Scripture indicate that the Great Tribulation will be seven years long (Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:7; Revelation 11:2-3, 12:6, 13:5). Why then does verse 21 say, "then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world", as if the Great Tribulation starts with the temple desecration? Since this passage is a warning to Israeli Jews, it implies that Israel will be largely unaffected by the devastation and persecution of the first half of the Tribulation. Zechariah indicates that God will place a hedge of protection (wall of fire) around Jerusalem and that she will be prosperous and blessed until the Tribulation midpoint (Zechariah 2:4-5; refer to Zechariah 1:12 and Revelation 17:15 commentary). For the Jews of Israel, the time of tribulation apparently begins with the "abomination of desolation" (24:15).

- "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (24:29-31). The second coming of Jesus Christ will be with power and great glory and will affect the sun, moon and stars. The Jewish people (tribes) will mourn when they realize that Jesus is their Messiah

(Zechariah 12; Revelation 1:7). During the second half of the Tribulation, the Jewish people will be scattered throughout the earth as they are "led captive into all the nations" (Luke 21:24) and as a result of intense persecution. Only the Jews that have fled to God's safe haven will be out of harm's way (Revelation 12:6, 14). The word "tribe" in the New Testament is mostly used to refer to descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; Hebrews 7:14; James 1:1). The angels will then gather "His elect" from all over the world. The word "elect" is used eight times in the Bible, always referring to believers in Christ (Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:33). Since the gathering of the elect follows immediately after the mourning of the Jews, it would seem likely that the elect that are gathered would include believing Jews and Gentiles.

- "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (24:32-35; see also Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33). This is a very difficult passage of Scripture to understand and it has been interpreted many different ways over the years. The parable of the fig tree may represent the end time rebirth of Israel (14 May 1948; Ezekiel 36:8; Hosea 9:10). Just as the appearance of leaves signifies the approach of summer, seeing "all these things" signifies that the second coming of the Son of Man (24:3, 30), the "end of the age" (24:3) and "the kingdom of God" (Luke 21:31) are near. "All these things" are the end-time events described in Matthew 24, including the abomination of desolation and the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15, 21). This end-time "generation" will witness "all these things" during their lifetime; probably limited to about 80 years. "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years" (Psalm 90:10). In summary, this passage could be explained in this way; the generation that witnesses the rebirth of Israel will also witness the end-time events mentioned in Matthew 24, including the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left. Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think he will " (24:36-44). Only God the Father knows the day of the rapture. People were not expecting the flood in Noah's day and most people will not expect the rapture in the end times. Christians should be alert and prepared for the rapture because we do not know which day our Lord is coming. The last passage of chapter 24 describes a wise servant

who was rewarded for obeying his master and an evil servant who was judged for his disobedience (24:45-51).

- The parable of the 10 virgins describes the rapture (25:1-13). The prudent virgins were prepared and alert and went to heaven with Jesus. The foolish virgins were not prepared and were left behind. After the shout, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him", there is a brief amount of time before the prudent virgins are actually caught up. They first wake up, then get up, trim their lamps, have a conversation about lamp oil and go to meet the Lord. This implies that believers who are alert and ready may have a few moments after the "shout" of the Lord to say a few last words, to write a quick note, to pull over if driving or to take action if doing something that may endanger lives. Refer also to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

- The parable of the talents shows the importance of faithfully serving the Lord and being prepared for His return (25:14-30). The next passage describes the judgment of unbelievers after the second coming of Christ (25:31-46). All the people of the world who have survived the Great Tribulation will be gathered before Jesus (24:31-33). "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (25:31-34). "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'" (25:41). The wicked "will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (25:46). Some writers say that the "nations" that are gathered before Jesus represent Gentiles, but not Jewish people. Although the word "nations" (ethnos) is sometimes translated "Gentiles", all the major English translations use the word "nations" for this verse. Some writers also note that when Jesus is speaking to the sheep, saying, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (25:40), "brothers" is referring to the Jewish people. Although this may be the case, it is more likely that "brothers" is referring to brothers in Christ, which would include Gentile and Jewish believers. When Jesus was with a large crowd, He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:49-50, refer also to Ezekiel 20:33-44). Therefore, whoever does God's will, whether Jew or Gentile is Jesus' brother.

*Matthew 28; The great commission, Jesus' promise (28:16-20)

- Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with them always as they traveled to all the nations making disciples. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (28:19-20).