

Sunday June 28<sup>th</sup> 2015  
Matthew Chapters 24-25  
Part Three

1). Mt 24:32 ¶ *"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 "So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors! 34 "Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. 35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

a). Following on from the Lord's direct answer to His disciples 2 questions concerning the time of Israel's desolation and the sign of His coming and the end of the age, the Lord then provides for the Jewish people an encouragement and a warning – the encouragement has to do with 'this parable of the fig tree' and the warning with 'the days of Noah'.

b). We might remember an incident with a fig tree recorded in – Mt 21:19 *And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again." Immediately the fig tree withered away.*

The fig tree is symbolic of the nation of Israel and the 'fig tree by the road', here at Christ's first advent, pictures the spiritually barren condition of the nation at that time. There are leaves on the tree, but no fruit for the Kingdom.

c). And as a result of finding no fruit on the tree, the Lord declares, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again' [literally 'for the age'] – this pronouncement is another way of presenting the desolate state of the nation that has existed from that time and will continue to exist in its ultimate form until the end of the tribulation, just as we had seen in Matthew Chapter 23 – Mt 23:38 *"See! Your house is left to you desolate;*

Israel throughout the remainder of this age then has been, and will continue to be, fruitless, will continue to be barren, and will yet face her ultimate desolation at the hands of Antichrist.

d). The fig tree however, as seen in Matthew Chapter 24, still picturing the nation of Israel, is in an entirely different condition to that seen in Matthew Chapter 21. In Chapter 24 we now see the branch being 'tender' and it is putting forth leaves in the certain expectation of fruit being produced – this picture shows us the result of the unprecedented persecution of the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation and in this sense the leaves produced on the fig tree in expectation of fruit would be synonymous with the birth pains of the nation, that which comes immediately prior to the nation's birth, immediately prior to the nation's fruitfulness – the birth of the nation out of the horror of the tribulation then will result in fruitfulness, fruit on the fig tree, in the Age to come, just as we had seen at the end of the panoramic sequence in –  
Ge 25:1 ¶ *Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.*  
All part of the new beginning that we saw at the end of the panoramic sequence, following the flood of Noah, in – Heb 11:8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.*

e). The Lord tells them that when 'you see all these things', those things seen in the last half of the Tribulation, the things He has just been telling them about, which equate with there being leaves on the fig tree and the birth pains, then they should *know that it* [or He] *is near--at the doors!* - His literal return and all that is contingent upon that, is imminent – this is all part of the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

f). With Christ's return Israel will be born out of the intense pain of the Tribulation and will now, having been fully redeemed, be in a position to produce fruit in the age to come – remember the prophetic word we had seen concerning this in - Joe 2:21 *Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things! 22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength. 23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you-The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. 24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. 25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the*

*chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. 26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame. 27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God And there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.*

g). And then there is the promise - *"Assuredly, I say to you, this generation [literally 'this people - the Jews'] will by no means pass away till all these things take place.* [Remember the days being shortened for the elect's sake]

h). That pictured through the fig tree in Chapter 24 and the promise we have just read provide one facet of the overall certainty of Israel's deliverance and restoration, something that is an incredible encouragement as we consider the horror that is about to engulf them.

i). This encouragement is then followed by the warning - *"For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.*

The Jewish people as a national entity have no idea what is coming and what will shortly take place and the horror that awaits them, and just as those in the days of Noah they will go about their normal lives in complete oblivion to God's prophetic purpose.

j). Things are about to change quickly and dramatically and will never be the same again and that which precipitates this dramatic and climactic change is the subject of the verses which follow.

2). Mt 24:40 *"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41 "Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.*

a). Up to this point, in His dealings with the nation of Israel, the Lord had moved into the time of the Tribulation looking to His Kingdom beyond it. In Matthew 24:40 – 25:30 there is a shift from Israel to the Church, with the timeframe now moving back to before the Tribulation, but the focus, as it must, still remains the Millennial Kingdom.

b). It will then be the resurrection/rapture of the Church that will immediately precipitate the dramatic change in the course of Man's history for Jews, Gentiles and Christians, and it is somewhat ironic that conditions as in 'the days of Noah' cited with respect to the nation of Israel, will also be a truth

for the greater majority of Christians who also have little to no understanding of the events that are about to suddenly and dramatically take place.

c). As we look at our 3 verses from Matthew 24, v40-42, what we see is not a picture of the resurrection/rapture itself, but what happens to Christians as a consequence of it. The 2 men in the field and the 2 women at the mill provide us with an all-inclusive picture of the everyday Christian experience prior to the resurrection/rapture and provide the first of a series of parables that give us a complete overview of that which is to take place during this present dispensation leading into that which will immediately follow – and the symbolism of the field and the mill may well have to do with a work within the context of this age, an allusion to working in Boaz's field in the Book of Ruth with a view to producing a harvest with the grinding at the mill being an allusion to Ruth beating out the grain – a picture of us rightly dividing the word of truth.

d). The phrase 'one will be taken and the other left' has been sadly abused over the years, largely because it is a very poor translation – this phrase should much more accurately be presented as 'one will be taken alongside [as an intimate companion] and one will not be taken alongside [as an intimate companion]'. The 2 Greek words translated in this phrase 'taken' and 'left' are set as complete opposites in the original language and must be seen as entirely antithetical. This phrase then has everything to do with positioning with respect to Christ's Kingdom and nothing to do with location.

e). The scene here then is Christ's Judgment Seat where one will be taken alongside Christ as an intimate companion – a joint heir, one of the many sons brought to glory, and one will be turned away from such a position.

f). And that which causes the separation between the one taken alongside and the one turned away is the subject of the parables that follow.

3). Mt 24:42 *"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43 "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. 44 "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

a). 'Watch' and 'be ready' are the key words in the Lord's words to Christians here in Matthew Chapters 24 and 25.

b). 'Watch therefore for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming' immediately follow the verses about 'one taken' and 'one left' – and the thought in this is obvious, we need to watch, to be vigilant, to be

continually on our guard as our life will not continue as it is, but will rather be the subject of sudden change resulting in one being taken and the other left – we need to watch that we should not be overcome, that we should not be deceived, that we are not overwhelmed by the world, the flesh and the devil, but rather we should be continuing our work of the faith in the correct field, beating out the grain after the proper fashion, looking from this world unto Jesus.

c). The parable that then follows in v43 emphasizes this same thing. Remember this is a parable, this is not to be taken literally, but rather seen as a picture of the truth the Lord wishes us to see.

d). The parable here deals with ‘the master of the house’ and the actions of a thief, actions that result in the master’s house being ‘broken up’ [broken into is really not the idea here].

e). This reflects back to the one taken and the one left – the house in this parable should be seen as the complete individual, body, soul and spirit, over which each of us is the ‘master’, and with this in mind we would see that the one taken has his ‘house’ preserved whereas the one left has his ‘house’ broken up by losing his soul/life for the age to come.

f). The idea then in the parable of the master of the house is that had he, the master of the house, known when the thief would come he would have taken steps to make sure his house was secure and therefore could not be broken up – but the obvious implication is that he did not know and therefore he had not taken the necessary steps to secure his house.

g). To now bring this over into the Christian experience Christ warns in v44 - *"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.* We don't know the hour of the Lord's return for His Church, therefore we need to be ready, constantly watchful, properly prepared or else the experience of the one turned away from being an intimate companion with Christ will be our own experience – our ‘house’ will be broken up.

h). ‘Watch’ – ‘Be ready’ – These are not suggestions.

4). Mt 24:45 *"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food [lit. ‘meat’] in due season?"*

a). V45 then reflects back on the verses that have preceded it – ‘who is the faithful and wise servant?’ Who is the one taken alongside Christ as an intimate companion? Who is the one who will have watched and been ready, having taken the necessary steps to make sure his ‘house’ is not broken up?

b). The simple answer of course is the servant who is following his Lord's instructions with regards to the administration of his Lord's house as we see in - Lu 19:12 *Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13 "So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'*

c). And in Matthew 24:45 the master's instructions have to do with providing 'meat' for the household in due season – and 'meat' has a specific connection to the Word of the Kingdom - Heb 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food ['meat']. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food ['meat'] belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

d). What then follows in Matthew Chapter 24 are the 2 possible outcomes for this same servant, one based on his choice to be faithful by providing the 'meat' and the other based on his choice to be unfaithful – it is the same servant throughout, but there is a different consequence for the choice which is made - Mt 24:46 *"Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. 47 "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. 48 "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' 49 "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, 50 "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

e). The servant who will be blessed, who will be made 'ruler over all his [master's] goods' is the one providing those in the house with 'meat in due season'; who is working correctly in the field and is beating out the grain.

f). And although there is an obvious temptation here to think only of those who teach the Word as the ones providing the 'meat', which is not unreasonable, we do need to view this within a broader context. Note what we find in - Eph 4:15 *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

And - Col 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

Heb 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

There is then in all of this a corporate responsibility that we all have towards each other. The way we live, the nature of our conversation with each other, our exhorting and our challenging and our assembling together must all be seen within the context of providing 'meat in due season' – and if we do so, and are found doing so upon our Lord's return, then as we have seen we will be blessed with respect to rulership - *he will make him ruler over all his goods.*

g). But if however our heart should become evil - Heb 3:12 *Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;*

Because we believe our Master is 'delayed' – then 2 things will happen, we will begin 'to eat and drink with the drunkards' – a picture of patterning the way we live focused on this world rather than being focused on the next, and we will begin to 'beat' our fellow servants.

h). This is not a literal beating, but would be best understood as 'a slap in the face'. If those appointed to teach the Word, the evangelist and pastor/teacher do not teach the whole counsel of God correctly, do not make clear the coming of Christ's Kingdom and all that is involved with that it would be like slapping those under their care in the face and likewise if each of us individually do not live in the sight of one another in such a way as to point to Christ's Kingdom, or we choose not to exhort, not to teach and not to admonish one another causing us to be working in the wrong field and therefore not beating out the grain then we are guilty of the same thing.

i). All in all then we see that this is a matter of faithfulness or unfaithfulness – to follow the instructions of our Master or to follow the dictates of our own heart - Php 2:20 *For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.*

j). And for those who know the Word of the Kingdom and yet choose to seek their own, not the things of Christ Jesus, the outcome is diametrically opposed to those who are faithful - 50 *"the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, 51 "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

We have already learned that our Master is coming at an hour we do not know and yet we have the certainty that He is coming. For the 'evil servant' seen in our verses from Matthew Chapter 24 he will no longer be mindful of even that and so for him - 1Th 5:2 *For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.*

k). In the day that Christ's Church is resurrected/raptured there will be no time to change anything, but just the receiving of a just recompense of reward - and for the 'evil servant' his reward is pictured through being cut in two and being appointed his portion with the hypocrites. Although that pictured here would take us back to a first century means of execution to point to the seriousness of that which is taking place we cannot help but also think of that which we see in - Heb 4:12 *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

For in that day the 'evil servant' will lose his soul/life for the age to come - his house will be broken up.

l). And the use of the word 'hypocrites' inevitably takes us back to the previous Chapter in Matthew and the Lord's words to the scribes and the Pharisees -Mt 23:14 *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!* And what will be the portion given to the scribes and Pharisees? - Mt 12:32 *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

m). And again we would want to come back to our key words here, 'watch', 'be ready' and we need to add 'pray'.

5). Lu 21:34 *"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be*

*counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."*

a). These are the parallel verses found in Luke's gospel to those we have been looking at in Matthew.

b). And we will note firstly the instruction given at the beginning of v34 'But take heed to yourselves' – Be vigilant, be on guard, be careful – and we are to do this so that our hearts do not become 'weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life' – all of which are synonymous with eating and drinking with the drunkards, which leads to beating our fellow servants.

c). And once more, we are to take heed to ourselves so that this 'Day' does not come upon us unexpectedly, 'for it will come as a snare to all those who dwell on the face of the earth', as a 'thief in the night' for those who are unprepared.

d). V36 then shows us the means by which we are to take heed to ourselves – 'Watch therefore and pray always....' And the object of our watching and praying is given in the remainder of the verse, 'that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass'.

e). The phrase 'that you may be counted worthy' should be better translated as, 'that you may be strong and win the victory over', giving us, 'that you may be strong and win the victory over, so as to escape out of all these things.' – And, 'All these things' refers back to the things which we saw in the previous verse, carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life.

f). So this verse then is exhorting us to watch and pray with a view to deliverance from becoming by' the cares of this life' – Eph 3:14 ¶ *For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

*Eph 6:18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

g). And if we do this then we will be able 'to stand before the Son of Man' [literally 'to take our stand in the presence of the Son of Man], to stand up out of all those who appear at Christ's Judgment Seat, the very thing that Paul prays for in - *Php 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection* [Lit. 'out-resurrection' - to stand up out] *from the dead*.

h). To take our stand in the presence of the Son of Man is the same as being taken alongside as an intimate companion, the same as being made ruler over all the Master's goods.

i). And for this to be our experience we have to be faithfully obedient to that which our Lord commands us in the verses we have been studying, we have to watch and pray, we have to be properly prepared so as to be ready, we have to be properly focused and to have patient endurance as we continue to do these things, there is no other choice.

j). We will continue with this next time – if the Lord is willing.