

# **“WHEN EXPECTING, EXPECT JUDGMENT”**

## ***Matthew 25***

### **Meditations for Peace Church**

**Dec. 31, 2006**

**PURPOSE** - To call people to prepare for Judgment Day by realizing its sure coming, by increasing the measures of the Spirit given, and by caring for the needs of the poor.

**MAIN IDEA** - Jesus is coming - so let's live prepared lives for a coming judgment which will examine our lives and reward them according to the measures of the Spirit within.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Let's open our Bibles to Matthew 25 (p. 1540).

1. Today we conclude a December series of sermons titled, “What to Expect When You're Expecting” ... the coming of Jesus ... again.

- Using the analogy of human pregnancy & birth ... and the witness of Christ's life, death & resurrection, we've recognized that we can expect to meet:

- The patience of God
- The increase of godlessness
- The increase of god-li-ness (the growth of the kingdom in the womb of this world)
- And Triumphant Joy - when we see our Lord face to face.

2. The Bible also clearly teaches, as I've summarized on the back of your bulletins, we can expect that our lives will BE JUDGED.

- Each and every one of us (Rom. 14:10) ... having every deed, word, even every “secret” judged by God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 2:16)

- This will occur when Jesus returns. 2 Thess. 1:7-10 - *“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels, He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.”*

3. On many occasions, Jesus called his people to prepare for that return and judgment.

Matthew 25 is composed of 3 passages - 2 parables & 1 story - designed to prepare followers of Jesus for His return.

The chapter immediately follows His teaching on the end-times in chapter 24 where He speaks of His return on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. "At that time" ... is how chapter 25 starts.

(i) We are going to work our way through this chapter a little differently this morning, taking each passage one at a time, highlighting just a couple of thoughts in each of them.

In terms of CONNECTING the 3 passages, I see them emphasizing the WHY, the HOW AND WHAT & WHO of preparing for Jesus' return & judgment.

4. *Read Mt. 25:1-13*

**I. THE WHY** - WHY do we prepare for Jesus' return?

1. Because He IS COMING - like a bridegroom to a wedding banquet.  
- Some will be prepared, some won't.

(i) Some will think they are prepared, but they'll find out in the course of time & the crises of life that THEY AREN'T prepared for the LONG HAUL.  
- their supplies of oil are inadequate!

2. It seems that this parable was given as a special warning for those INSIDE the professing church.  
- They had some oil to begin with.

(i) But maybe they were unBiblically presumptive about their future.

A. Like someone who thinks, "Yea, I walked down the aisle 15 years ago" kind of guys ... "Got right with God - everything's hunky-dory between us. I made a decision at Camp - everything's fine now. In fact, don't really even need to think of him that often".

- Like the husband whose wife wondered if he loved her. And he responded, "I told you once when we got married. If things change, I'll tell you again."

- Does he really have love? He might think he does but ...

(i) The apostle Paul writes in Phil. 3, *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection of the dead.”*

- This is an amazing statement!

I’m sure he believed that he would be translated into glory in the age to come, but it’s almost as if it is such an INCREDIBLE promise that, in order to help his faith, he gave himself again and again and again to SHARING IN JESUS’ SUFFERINGS in this world.

- He was not presumptive about his preparations!

KNOWING CHRIST DAILY in the power of His resurrection & fellowship of His suffering is the only way Biblically we attain the resurrection of the dead.

3. This parable may also have been geared to those in the church because it further teaches that READINESS IS NOT TRANSFERRABLE.

- You might think, “Well, why didn’t the 5 wise ones share with the 5 foolish? ... Isn’t that selfish?”

(i) No! The point Jesus is making is that you can’t rely on another’s preparedness.

- You are responsible for YOUR LIFE ... young people!

It’s not enough to think, “I’m a part of a Christian family; Christian church”.

- Each is responsible for his own preparation.

4. And responsibility is REAL.

The door to the feast SHUT S OUT people NOT READY for Jesus’ return.

(i) ... and they experience the ULTIMATE REJECTION:

*“I don’t know you”*, says the Bridegroom.

A. If triumphant joy is located in Jesus’ joy over our lives - as I preached on Christmas Day, I can’t imagine more TRAGIC DESPAIR for someone growing up with the gospel than hearing those words from the Lord, “I don’t know you!”

FOR THOSE REASONS, we prepare for His return.

\* Hymn # 333 - “Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers”

### **III. HOW**

Let's shift towards the HOW of preparation. *Read Mt. 25:14-30.*

1. When Christ returns, He will NOT ask: "Did you get the date of my coming correct?" ... BUT, "What have you been doing while waiting?"

- Christian vigilance is not passive waiting, trying to figure out the purposes of God. It consists of active, responsible service.

This is a parable about STEWARDSHIP & its consequences in the Day of the Lord.

2. I think of this parable in conjunction with yesterday's Memorial Service.

(i) The TALENTS Jesus speaks of are not abilities - like musical or athletic talents. They are measures of KINGDOM RESOURCES - measures of the Spirit - God's truth & love ENTRUSTED TO US.

A. Some of us in this age are ENTRUSTED with an abundance of these kingdom resources from our homes & churches & schools. We are taught what the reign of God means. We see it. We live in it. We learn it.

Others have less of those resources. Everyone, Jesus seems to imply, has some testimony of the Spirit in this age - if only from the witness of creation and the morality of the conscience.

(i) I thought of these resources yesterday in conjunction with Vern. WHAT A TALENT! (Not his gifts, but a KINGDOM RESOURCE entrusted to us!)

I thought of this parable too in conjunction with the speakers who paraded up here. I'm sitting there thinking, "These are amazing Christian people! - Nederhood, Madany, Oostings!"

A. If we're anyone in this parable, we're the 5-talent servants!

3. But it's point is, WHAT DO WE DO WITH THESE KINGDOM RESOURCES?

- Do we bury them?

- Or do we take them and work with them - deepening / broadening our vision, longing & experience of the reign of God in our lives and in this world?

- Are we growing in the Spirit?

- Is the reign of God becoming more COMPREHENSIVE in our experience?

- Is that reign growing THROUGH our lives?

4. On the Day of Judgment, we will be rewarded according to those questions.

- As POINT 7 on the back of the bulletin states: *While entrance into heaven is based solely on the righteousness of Christ, there will be different degrees in eternity, both of the bliss of heaven and the punishment of hell.*

(i) The simplest way to understand the rewards of heaven is that it is LONGING FULFILLED.

I.e. - say you were in high school and you were told about a student in India who was interested in beginning a pen-pal relationship (today - email). You find out some things about her - age, interests, family. And then you decide to go for it. You begin to write her ... and she writes back FAITHFULLY ... every time.

Now you could take this opportunity and write once a year - share some of your highlights from 2006 ... OR ... you could write her everyday - share your heart, share your questions, your joys, your struggles. And she would respond with her heart - her love, her concern, her wisdom, her values.

Imagine then the difference that would be when you find out all of a sudden that she's coming to visit you and see you face to face.

The deeper the friendship formed, the greater will be the fellowship experienced when you are together.

- Fellowship in joy / fellowship in service

(ii) That's heaven's reward - the more we've worked with, tasted & longed for God's beauty, truth & goodness in Jesus; the deeper we will experience that fellowship when it is FULLY REVEALED in our lives.

*"For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance!" (v. 29)*

5. On the contrary, if we BURY our measures of the Kingdom, the Day of Reckoning will bring REJECTION & pain.

- What amounts we did have will be taken from us and added to the joy of those sharing their Master's happiness.

HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR JUDGMENT DAY?

- By taking the measures of the Kingdom of God entrusted to us and growing that reign within and around this world.

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LET'S SING & PRAY - Hymn # 296: 1,2,5 - "We Give You But Your Own"

Offering - Peace Church Youth Ministries

**IV. WHAT & WHO**

Lastly, the WHAT & WHO.

- We can talk about growing in the Kingdom for Judgment Day... but that's still rather abstract.

- Here's what such preparation actually looks like: *READ Mt. 25:31-46*

1. Rev. James Forbes best sums up this passage with these words:

NOBODY GETS TO HEAVEN WITHOUT A REFERENCE LETTER FROM THE POOR. (2X)

(i) Now we know that it's only through faith in the blood of Jesus that we have peace with God. But Jesus is here teaching that this is how we know that our faith is real; that we TRULY belong to Him who died for the needs of this world.

- Faith without such works is not true faith.

2. And lest we TOO NARROWLY think of the poor, let me read these words of Mother Theresa addressed to her Sisters of Charity at the beginning of a new year:

*READ pp. 72-73*

3. A Day is coming when the sheep & goats will be divided. And it's interesting that BOTH the sheep & goats are SURPRISED on that Day

- NOT AT THEIR DESTINY of eternal life or punishment!

(i) They are surprised at the REASON GIVEN for their destinies.

- They did not realize that their daily lives and the deeds done in them - or not done in them - were so WEIGHTY.

A. LIFE MATTERS - each day - because in expecting the coming of Jesus again, we expect Judgment Day also to come.

May His Word & Spirit lead us to be prepared for that Day. AMEN