

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 25 -- John Karmelich

1. My title for Chapter 25 is, "Jesus the Judge".
 - a) Remember that the purpose of Matthew's Gospel is to present Jesus as the promised Messiah (king) to Israel.
 - b) We think of a king as somebody who rules over a territory.
 - c) In the ancient world, the king is also the "Supreme Court" in judgment.
 - i) We get a clue of that in the Book of Acts. Paul, as a Roman Citizen "appealed to Caesar" in his trials (Acts 25:11). This was the right of every Roman Citizen to have his court case heard by the Emperor himself.
 - d) Well, Jesus role as "judge" is a little more serious than a civil or criminal judge.
 - i) Jesus role as "judge" is to determine eternal salvation.
 - ii) Jesus, not God the Father makes the determination of who spends eternity in heaven and who spends eternity in hell.
 - iii) "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son," (John 5:22, NIV)
2. Chapter 25 focuses on 2 parables and a final description of judgment.
 - a) The first is (what I call), "The parable of the 10 virgins". This is in Verses 1-13.
 - b) The second is... "The parable of the talents". This is in Verses 14-30.
 - c) The third is... "The judgment of the nations". This is in Verses 31-46.
 - d) In all three cases the focus is on the judgment.
3. Chapter 25 continues the "Olivet Discourse". This is a two-chapter speech by Jesus.
 - a) It is given only a few days prior to the cross.
 - b) The main focus is in what happens when Jesus returns. Chapter 24 opens with the disciples asking about the "signs" prior to Jesus' second coming.
 - i) Chapter 24 focuses on those signs.
 - ii) Chapter 25 goes one step further:
 - a) It focuses on the events after those "signs".
 - b) It focuses on what Jesus does after he returns to earth.
 - c) In summary, it is all about judgment and rewards.
 - c) It is not fair to say the chapter is just about judgment.
 - i) It is also about the rewards for those who are faithful.
 - ii) The interesting thing to note is that some of these punishments and rewards are not just to individuals but also groups.
 - a) We are going to get hints in this chapter that Jesus judges nations as well as individuals when He returns.
 - b) The bible clearly teaches that eternal salvation or eternal damnation is "an individual thing" and is not corporate. Therefore, this corporate judgment represents something else, as we will discuss in this chapter.
4. Chapter 25, Verse 1: At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
 - a) Let's start with the phrase "At that time". The question is, "At what time?"
 - i) Jesus spent the last part of Chapter 24 discussing "how no one knows the day nor the hour of His return". (See Matthew 24:36)
 - ii) Chapter 25 now focuses on what happens when Jesus returns.
 - iii) The difference between Chapter 24 and Chapter 25 is that Chapter 24 focuses on the events leading up to Jesus' return, and Chapter 25 focuses on the events that happen after his return.

- b) Jesus tries to explain what life will be like immediately after his return in parables.
 - i) Parables are illustrations designed to illustrate a point.
 - ii) Jesus says the “kingdom of heaven” will be like ten virgins.”
 - a) Therefore, we know Jesus is not being literal in this section.
 - c) Before we move on, it might be helpful to explain a Jewish wedding ritual of that day as that ties in to this parable.
 - i) In a Jewish marriage of that day, the parents of the bride and groom arranged a match. (Given the fact I have daughters, I like this idea. ☺)
 - ii) Next, there was a formal engagement period.
 - iii) The bride either knew the exact day of the wedding, or the approximate day.
 - iv) The wedding itself is like a “surprise party” to the bride, in that she did not know the exact time of the wedding. Usually the groom came to the bride’s house as a big procession. The town “stopped what they were doing” and then joined the wedding procession. The wedding feast would then last for many days.
 - v) There is a Jewish tradition that a wedding party had 10 bridesmaids, which is a possibility of why Jesus picked the number 10 as the number of bridesmaids.
 - d) Leading back to Verse 1, Jesus is now comparing the “kingdom of God” to 10 bridesmaids who hear the groom coming, and now goes out to meet him.
 - i) Remember the “kingdom of God”, in the scope of the New Testament, refers to all people who are saved through Jesus. It refers to those who have eternal life because they willfully choose to follow Jesus.
 - a) In eternity, there are also Old Testament “saints” and there will probably be people who never heard of Jesus who will be judged fairly.
5. Verse 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.
- a) Jesus separates the ten virgins into two groups of five.
 - b) The key difference is that one group of five had enough oil for their lamps for this journey, while the other five did not carry any extra supply.
 - c) One has to remember there was no electricity in those days.
 - i) To travel at night, one had to carry some sort of oil-based lamps.
 - d) The main key to understanding this parable is that oil is a symbol (word-picture) of the Holy Spirit.
 - i) This is not bluntly stated anywhere in the bible, but there are a lot of clues:
 - a) “So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. (1st Samuel 16:13a, NIV)
 - e) OK John, that’s neat. What’s the point? Jesus because the maidens used or lacked oil, what does that have to do with the eternal judgment theme of Chapter 25?
 - i) Let’s look at the last line of this parable, which is Verse 12:
 - ii) “I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.” (Matthew 25:12, NIV)
 - iii) If the oil represents the Holy Spirit, working in our life, Jesus is saying you can’t get into heaven unless you have the Holy Spirit working in your life.
 - iv) Let me give you a more practical example.
 - a) Let’s say you believe Jesus is God.
 - b) How does that make you any different from demons? Don’t demons believe that Jesus is God too? (See James 2:19)
 - c) The question becomes what are you doing with that knowledge of Jesus?
 - d) Having the Holy Spirit be a part of your life is simply to ask God to “take over your life”. That moment of salvation is when the spirit of God starts to live inside of you. (Reference: See John 16:7)

- e) To be a Christians is to develop that personal relationship with God.
 - (1) You pray to Him for guidance.
 - (2) You study your bible for guidance.
 - (3) You spend time with other Christians (partially) for guidance.
 - (4) You want God ruling in your life.
 - f) If you fail to ever start developing that relationship, Jesus can look at you on judgment day and say, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you."
 - g) That is what this parable of the ten virgins is all about.
- 6. Verse 5: The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
 - a) Let's face it. Jesus has taken a long time for his second coming.
 - i) We have had about 2,000 years so far. That's a pretty long time. ☺
 - a) Remember that Jesus is taking a long time in coming as to save as many people as possible for eternity.
 - ii) If you read the whole parable, the virgins are not punished for falling asleep.
 - a) Five of them get rewards ("saved") and five are punished.
 - b) The main point is the "good five" have enough oil and are prepared for whenever the groom shows up.
 - b) My point is that Jesus does not expect us at every single moment of our lives to be focus upon him. That is a physical impossibility.
 - i) Just as the five wise virgins had extra oil, so should we spend our time doing what God wants us to do. Not every single moment of every single day. The kids will never get fed and the laundry will never get done. ☺.
 - ii) It is not so much about spending every waking moment thinking about God as it is making God part of every aspect of our life.
- 7. Verse 6: "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'"
 - a) There is going to be a day when Jesus does return. Life does not go on forever as is.
 - i) I used to think, "I hope Jesus comes back when I'm doing something good like writing one of these lessons or I'm in the middle of prayer. I don't want him coming back when I committing some sin at the moment."
 - b) As I've matured as a believer, I've come to realize I'm "asleep" a lot like these brides. Yes, I have my "stock of oil", because I have my trust in Jesus and have a relationship with Him. Given that, I don't have to panic if Jesus comes at a bad moment.
 - i) I once heard a great illustration on this topic. A priest was playing a racquetball game. Somebody asked him a question in the middle of the game to the effect of "What would you do if you knew Jesus was coming back in a half an hour?" His response was, "I'll finish my racquetball game."
 - ii) I'm not advocating ignoring God to play sports. Just the opposite, I want to live my life that is pleasing to God. My point is that if you have that personal relationship with God, you don't have to panic if you are doing some recreational item at one moment of your life.
 - iii) Remember the concept of "Love God as hard as you can and then do what you want". If you are living your life that way, your other items will be limited. Again, these ten brides were asleep when the groom showed up. They were not condemned for that action.
- 8. Verse 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.'"
- a) This part sounds "un-Christian-like".
 - i) The five brides with a stock of oil wouldn't help those who didn't have any oil.
 - b) This is why you have to remember that in this parable, "oil" represents the Holy Spirit.

- c) When the girls with the extra oil say, "There may not be enough for both us and you", it refers to salvation. You can't "share" your salvation with anyone.
 - i) By that I mean you can't get into heaven because your spouse is a Christian or your parents or Christians or say, "you are an American".
 - ii) It is strictly an individual thing. You must ask God to come into your heart and do this yourself.
9. Verse 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.
- a) The parable ends in Verse 13 with the command to "keep watch".
 - b) Jesus point, first of all, is that there is a point-in-time in our life when it is too late.
 - i) For most of us, it comes at the point of death.
 - ii) At some future date, that point will be at Jesus second coming.
 - a) For that generation, they can't look at Jesus and say (lying), "Jesus, I knew you were coming back .I've always knew you were Lord .How about letting me into heaven now?"
 - c) I believe that same picture of a wedding ceremony between Jesus and his church is also being illustrated in a reference in Revelation.
 - i) The latter part of the Book of Revelation describes a wedding ceremony.
 - ii) "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb (Jesus) has come, and his bride (the church) has made herself ready. (Revelation 19:7, NIV)
 - iii) In both the text in Matthew and in Revelation, those who were "ready" and "prepared" get to go into the banquet.
 - iv) Those who think they are invited because say, "They believe Jesus is God", but then never did anything about it" get cast out.
 - d) There is another important point about "keeping watch".
 - i) A common point made throughout the bible is to keep our focus upon God.
 - a) When we have that eternal perspective in our lives, God can mature us and help us grow in our relationship with Him.
 - b) "Keeping watch" is not just sitting around the house, praying for God's return, but it is to stay involved in whatever ministry God has called for us.
 - c) It is about making God a priority in our lives. Through that power of God working in our heart, we can then go about our lives living them as God desires for us.
 - e) Well, we made it through the first of the three stories of this chapter.
 - f) Take a deep breath, its time for story #2. ☺
10. Verse 14: "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.
- a) This is the second parable in the chapter.
 - i) Verse 14 has the word "like" so we know it is not meant to be taken literally.
 - ii) The word "talent" refers to a measure of weight, like a "pound" or a "ton".
 - iii) A Roman "pound" was an expensive exchange of money.
 - iv) A rough, modern equivalent might be a thousand-dollar bill, or maybe a one-ounce solid gold coin.

- b) The next thing to notice is the word “ability” in Verse 15.
 - i) This “man-in-charge” gave one guy 5 talents, another 2 talents, and another 1 talent, “according to their ability”.
 - ii) God does not give everybody the same level of responsibility.
 - iii) Further, we are not to be jealous of those who have more talents nor prideful over those who have less.
 - iv) What is important is, “What are you doing with the “talents” God has given you?”
 - c) Here is a key phrase that ties in well to this parable:
 - i) “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” (Luke 12:48a, NIV)
 - ii) John’s loose translation, If God gives you a lot, He expects a lot.”
 - iii) The servant who got five talents earned five more.
 - iv) The servant who got two talents earned two more.
 - v) What we will read is that these two guys each got the exact same reward in heaven. Therefore it is not about how much “talent” God gives you, it is only about what you do with those talents God has given you.
 - vi) Remember, God gave each servant “talents” based on their ability.
 - a) God is well aware of our abilities. If He thought we could handle more, He would give us more. There is also the possibility God will give you more in the future based on how well you handle the talents He gives you now.
 - d) Now we get to the one-talent-bad-person. Verse 18 states that the one person who got only one talent stuck it in the ground and did not get any more.
 - i) This person was also aware that it was “the master’s money”.
 - ii) Later we will learn that the guy with one talent gets sent to hell.
 - iii) This sentence implies that God tests all people, not just the ones who are saved.
 - iv) God gives talents to people, and sees if they use it for his glory or themselves.
 - a) To me, it is so sad to watch people with incredible God-given talents never thank God for those gifts. They insult God by giving themselves credit “for all of their hard work” and not acknowledging God who gave them the talent and the drive to succeed in the first place.
11. Verse 19: "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.
- a) Notice the phrase “after a long time”.
 - b) Remember in the parable of the 10 brides, the groom waited so long they were asleep.
 - c) Jesus is giving lots of hints that it will be a long time before his Second coming.
 - d) My opening theme of Chapter 25 is that it is about “Jesus the Judge”.
 - i) Verse 19 says that when the “master” comes back, it is to “settle (the) accounts”.
 - a) Judgment is coming, not only for the unbeliever, but also for the believers.
 - b) “For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.” (Matthew 16:27, NIV)
12. Verse 20: The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ ²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ ²² “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ ²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’
- a) The first thing to notice is that Verses 21 and 23 are identical, word-for-word.

- i) The servant who doubled the five-talents-to-ten gets the exact same reward as the servant who doubled the two-talents-to-four.
- b) I have to admit, a big part of life is the strong desire to hear Jesus say to me, “Well done good and faithful servant”.
 - i) I have no idea exactly how many talents Jesus has given me.
 - ii) I have no idea exactly how many talents I have earned in my lifetime.
 - iii) I just focus on what God calls me to do and let God worry about the results.
 - iv) Still, there is always that sense of “Am I doing enough? Am I having a good balance between my ministry, my home life, my family, my job etc.?”
 - a) I have heard it is a common fear among older Christians that they look back at their life and think, “I should have done more.”
 - v) What I have to remember during those moments is the phrase:
 - a) “The just shall live by faith”. This is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4.
 - b) Paul quotes this phrase three times in his letters:
 - (1) Paul focuses on the “just” in Romans (Romans 1:17)
 - (2) Paul focuses on the “shall live” in Galatians (Gal. 3:11)
 - (3) Paul focuses on the “by faith” in Hebrews (Heb. 10:38).
 - (a) Some argue Paul didn’t write Hebrews. I believe it was Paul just because of this “trilogy” view of this quote.
 - vi) My point is that we should not feel “stressed” that we’re not doing enough.
 - a) There has to be a balance in a Christian’s life to:
 - (1) Live in a sense of urgency to live the Christian life and
 - (2) Let God worry about the results.
 - b) If we do live our lives for God, then we can walk by faith that Jesus will say “well done, good and faithful servant. Come and share your master's happiness!”

13. Verse 24: "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'
- a) The first thing to notice about the man who received one talent is that he is afraid.
 - b) In Verse 26 (coming up) Jesus repeats almost verbatim his fears of Verse 24.
 - c) Near the end of the Book of Revelation, God describes who will not be in heaven:
 - i) But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8, NIV)
 - ii) Notice “the cowardly” are listed first. Even before unbelievers and murders!
 - d) God will not accept the excuse of “I couldn’t be a Christian because I was afraid”.
 - i) Notice this verse in Matthew is written about someone who was aware of who Jesus was “the master” and is aware of his requirements.
 - ii) This part of the parable is written to those who have heard the gospel message and have not done anything about it out of fear of retribution or fear of unpopularity.
 - e) Cowardliness is a difficult and dangerous aspect to deal with.
 - i) Many fear being a witness for Jesus because they don’t want to be unpopular. Let’s face it, to “stand up for Jesus” means unpopularity with many people.
 - ii) Many fear being a witness for Jesus because they feel they are inadequate. They fear they are not good enough to help anyone. They lack self-confidence.
 - iii) Remember that God himself created all things and knows all things.
 - a) He is well aware of all of your weaknesses.

- b) Instead of being a “victim” and saying, “I can’t do any better”, we need to turn to God who has given us every sort of power imaginable and say, “I am making myself available to you. Use me as I am, and make me into a better witness for you so that I can glorify you in life.”
 - c) I think at that point, God smiles and says, “I was waiting for you to say that. Let me take over and watch what I can do!”
 - iv) Remember that apostles prayed for boldness (see Acts 4:29). There is no reason you and I cannot do the same.
 - f) I should also state that this is not about temporary lapses in faith.
 - i) We all have our bad days. I stated many chapters ago that Peter denied Jesus three times and I’m pretty sure he’s in heaven right now. ☺
 - ii) What I do find is that the more time you spend with God, via prayer, via bible reading and bible study, and via time with other Christians, you grow in your confidence as a Christian and you become less and less afraid to speak out.
 - g) Which leads us back to this verse. This is about a servant who was given a talent by God, and hid it in the ground. He was too afraid to do anything with it.
 - i) I believe in direct context, it refers to someone who hears the word of God and then does nothing about it.
 - ii) Remember that Christianity is not saying Jesus is God. Demons believe Jesus is God. What differs you from the demons?
 - a) Christianity is about acting upon your faith.
 - iii) If you are sitting there thinking, “Ok, God must have given me some “talents”, what do I do with them?
 - iv) The answer is “get involved”. If you are not sure how, ask your pastor or pray to God to guide you how he wants you involved.
 - a) The answers may surprise you. It may be some ministry group within your church or community. It may be some national or international ministry group God wants you either to financially or prayerfully support.
 - b) I like the concept that “if you have financial resources, use them. If you don’t have a lot, then you have time on your hands. Use that to regularly prayerfully support whatever ministry group God calls you to support.
14. Verse 26: "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?' ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.
- a) Notice Jesus lack of compassion. Notice Jesus does not say, “You poor dear, so are so afraid, come on into heaven. I know you meant well”. ☺
 - b) No, this is Jesus the judge. When Jesus comes back to earth, it is for judgment.
 - c) My point is that there is a definite time when it is too late.
 - i) For most, it is at our death.
 - ii) When Jesus returns, whenever that it, that is a wrap up and it is exam-time.
 - d) Notice Jesus is acknowledging the guy’s guilt in Verse 26.
 - i) Jesus repeats back what the man admitting to in Verse 26.
 - ii) I believe when people get judged there will be no excuses.
 - iii) My personal view is that God will judge all people fairly and those who get sent to hell will be very aware of why they were sent to hell.
 - iv) Remember that there two judgments in heaven, a thousand years apart.
 - a) This is discussed in Revelation 20:4-15.
 - b) The first judgment is for believers. Rewards are given at that point and no one at this judgment is sent to hell.

- c) The second judgment is for unbelievers where people are judged on their “works”. This judgment mentions hell but it does not say whether some people from this judgment make it into heaven.
 - e) Let’s get back to these verses. Jesus said in effect, “At the least, you should have put your talent into an interest-bearing savings account and I get some return on my money”.
 - i) Even though my father was a banker and I work with this industry, I don’t think Jesus is discussing the benefit of an interest bearing savings account. ☺
 - ii) I believe Jesus point is in order to be saved, we have to do something or anything.
 - iii) I believe Jesus is saying to this guy, “Look, you didn’t have to double-your-money like the other two guys to get into heaven, just give me some sort of return on investment.
 - iv) That is a comforting message to Christians.
 - a) We may think that we have to lead millions to Christ or do some great and outstanding achievement in order to get great rewards in heaven.
 - b) Jesus does not call every believer to do large-scale ministries.
 - c) Jesus is simply looking for us to what he has called us to do.
 - d) For some, it may be raising Godly children, or spending our lives giving comfort to an individual and maturing them as Christians.
 - e) Jesus looked at this guy and said in effect, “I told you the Gospel message. All I wanted was for you to do something with it. You never went to church; you never got involved in any ministry. You never prayed for anyone but yourself when you were sick. In that aspect, you are a lazy servant and don’t deserve to be in heaven.”
15. Verse 28: ‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.
- a) Notice the single talent is given to the guy who had 10 talents.
 - b) Remember that when Jesus told the guy who made 5+5 talents the exact same reward as the guy made 2+2 talents. Verses 21 and 23 are identical in rewards.
 - c) So why does the “10 talent” guy now get more? Why didn’t Jesus split it with the “five guy” too?
 - d) I think the principal here is Jesus is always calling us to do more.
 - i) Not in the sense of being a workaholic for God and ignoring your family.
 - ii) God wants us to trust Him more and more and step out in faith more.
 - iii) Think of a parent training a child: “Son/daughter, I’m very proud of what you just accomplished. That is great. Now lets go on to the next step.”
 - iv) God is always working in our lives the same way.
 - v) The concept of the “10 talent guy getting an 11th” is saying, I trusted you with five, and you got five more. Let’s see with you can do with another.”
 - e) You may think “God only gave me two or five talents” at this point in your life, but God loves you as much as the person who has ten. Be faithful in what God has given you now and wait on God’s timing for more talents.
 - f) This leads to the next question: How do we know we are “doubling our money?”
 - i) Some people can see their results very easily, others cannot.
 - ii) For example, some ministries that help the poor can see their results. Some that focus on evangelism can see people coming to Christ.
 - iii) On the other hand, some people die suddenly and don’t see their results.
 - iv) If you are in a prayer ministry, it is difficult at times to see your results.
 - v) What we worry about is: “Are we doing enough? Am I making a difference? Am I doubling-the-talents God has given me?”

- vi) First of all, God loves us with an everlasting love. (See Jeremiah 31:3).
 - a) Our salvation is not based on “doubling our talents” but in trusting Jesus.
 - b) Our rewards in heaven are based on our faithfulness to whatever God has called us to do.
 - vii) Next, Remember what Isaiah said:
 - a) “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11, NKJV)
 - b) John’s loose translation: If you are doing what God called you to do, the results are God’s problem, not yours. You are “doubling your talents”, not because of your or my outstanding ability to accomplish things, ☺ but because God is faithful to do what he set out to accomplish. God chooses to work through us to accomplish his goals for man.
 - g) One last analogy and then we’ll move on.
 - i) Suppose you have some financial savings and you decide to buy some stocks.
 - ii) How do you choose the right ones?
 - iii) You pick the ones you think will bring the greatest return on your investment.
 - iv) The same goes with our service in the Christian ministry.
 - a) Get involved (prayerfully, financially, time commitment) to the ones you believe are bringing “the best return on investment”.
 - b) It may be a ministry where God has given you a special talent to get involved with.
 - c) It may be a ministry that you see blessing other people, so you prayerfully and/or financially support that ministry.
16. Verse 30: And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- a) This parable ends with the “lazy servant” getting thrown into hell.
 - b) A point to make about this is not everyone who hears the Gospel message goes to heaven. Salvation is for those who believe the Gospel in their heart. Their actions follow. They are not saved because of their ministerial involvement, they are saved because they believed in Jesus and “naturally” wanted to do something about it.
17. Verse 31: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.”³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.³³ He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
- a) Now we start the third story in this chapter. It is called the “sheep and goat judgment”.
 - b) One of the keys to understanding this parable is the word “nations”.
 - i) The word “nations” can also refer to Gentiles. We’ll discuss that in a minute.
 - c) The key thing to remember is that this takes place after the 7-year tribulation.
 - d) Before we get into specifics, I need to talk a little about the idioms of “sheep and goats”.
 - i) Most Christians understand that we are compared to sheep.
 - ii) Jesus calls himself “The Good Shepherd” (John 10:11, and 10:14).
 - iii) Sheep, as animals are not bright. The good news is they can be lead.
 - iv) Goats as a Jewish-idiom are associated with sin.
 - a) The first mention of goat hair is when Jacob disguised himself as his brother Esau in order to fool his going-blind dad (Genesis 27). He wore goat hair on his skin to make him feel more hairy. Since Genesis, goats are associated with sin.
 - b) In the Levitical sacrifice system, there is the “scapegoat” where the High Priest lays the sins of the people on the goat. The goat is then set free to symbolically show God forgiving us of our sins (Leviticus Chapter 16).

- e) At this point, it may help to show a few verses from Revelation:
 - i) “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over..(skipping to Verse 12) And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened.” (Revelation 20: 6-7, 12 NIV)
 - ii) My point is when you read Revelation 20, there is a 1,000 year “gap” between the time Jesus comes back and the time that the “nations” (or Gentiles get judged).
 - a) Here in Matthew, Jesus is judging the nations right after He returns.
- f) Which leads us back to the “amillennial versus pre-millennial” debate.
 - i) Those who are amillennialist don’t believe in a literal 1,000-year period.
 - a) Therefore, they see this passage in Matthew as Jesus coming back to judge all the people of the earth who didn’t believe in Him or never heard of him.
 - b) They read the next set of verses as the basis for judgment.
 - ii) Those who are pre-millennialist believe in a literal 1,000-year period.
 - a) If that is the case (I’m one of these), then this judgment in Matthew 25 must be different from the “great throne judgment” of Revelation 20.
 - (1) In Matthew 25, Jesus is judging people right after the tribulation, but the 1,000-year millennial hasn’t started yet.
 - (2) That is contradictory to what is taught in Revelation.
 - b) If that is the case, what is this judgment here in Matthew?
 - c) Remember in this view, the 7-year tribulation has just ended.
 - d) In this 7-year period, God focuses his attention on the Nation of Israel. After that time, Jesus comes back and rules the earth from Jerusalem.
 - e) Some people will survive through this tribulation.
 - f) God had two witnesses in Jerusalem preaching Jesus is God (Rev. 11: 3-4) and 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7:4, 14:1,3) preaching through the world.
 - g) Despite that, most people of this time era reject God.
 - h) This “sheep/goat” judgment of Matthew is that judgment.
 - i) Those who turned to Jesus and were “pro-Israel” during this time are the “sheep”. Those who did not are the goats.

18. Verse 34: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.
- a) Many people will survive this 7-year tribulation.
 - b) I believe many get saved, some are Jews and some are Gentiles.
 - c) At this point, when Jesus returns he is judging the nations.
 - d) Let’s look at something in Daniel 12:
 - i) “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. ¹²Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.” (Daniel 12:11-12, NIV)
 - ii) The “abomination that causes desolation” is the halfway point of the 7-year tribulation. The “abomination” ends with the return of Jesus after 1,290 days.
 - iii) Next we have these 1,335 days, which is 45 days more than 1,290 days.
 - iv) Most commentators, and myself, believe this extra 45 days is the time frame of the “sheep and goat” judgment.
 - v) I say that because Daniel says, “Blessed is the one who reaches the 1,335 days”.
 - vi) That tells me those who survive this judgment are blessed.
 - e) There are some pre-millennialists who take the view that those “nations” that honor Jesus during this time are those who get to repopulate the earth.
 - i) Therefore, those “sheep” do get eternal salvation, but they also get to live and repopulate the earth during this 1,000-year period.

19. Verse 35: For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ³⁷ "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?' ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?' ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' ⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'
- a) Jesus is teaching in these verses the criteria for judgment.
 - i) These people ask Jesus, "When did we see you sick, or in need?"
 - ii) Jesus says in effect, "How you treat "one of my brothers" is how you treat me."
 - b) Let's start with the amillennial view. (The view that there is no literal 1,000-year period).
 - i) They see this set of verses as being about helping the poor, visiting the sick, visiting the brothers (Christians) in jail, and helping them.
 - ii) The view is the salvation and rewards are based on how we treat other Christians.
 - iii) They read this that a "sign" of our salvation is how well we treat other believers is symbolic of how we feel about Jesus.
 - iv) There is a lot of truth to this view. Even though I do not hold this view, there is the truth to the fact that if you love Jesus, you should have love for those who also love Jesus. Although I don't believe that is what Jesus meant by this paragraph, there is truth to the concept that God wants us to help and support other believers.
 - c) Let's move on to the pre-millennial view. (The view that the 1,000 millennial is future.)
 - i) Remember that Jesus is judging the nations.
 - a) To a 1st Century Jew, to say "nations" means "non-Jews" or Gentiles.
 - b) Never forget that Jesus is "Jewish". The end of Revelation will see the nation of Israel collectively realize they were wrong about Jesus, repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah.
 - (1) The view is that sometime during the tribulation the nation of Israel will collectively realize they were wrong about Jesus, repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah.
 - c) This "sheep/goat" judgment is Jesus now saying in effect "OK everyone one, its time for me to judge how you treated my fellow Jews!
 - d) It could also be judgment on those who didn't believe the Gospel message at this time and persecuted those who did believe.
 - ii) With that in mind, let's go back to this paragraph of Verses 35-40.
 - a) Jesus says in effect, "When did you see me sick, or poor, or in jail, etc.?"
 - b) Revelation teaches that people cannot buy or sell without taking "the mark of the beast". (Rev. 13:7) Therefore, I see many Christians being sick, poor and in jail during this time frame.
 - (1) I suspect many are thrown in prison for their belief. (See Rev. 20:4)
 - iii) Therefore, one can read this paragraph and see, "those who are sick, poor, hurting, or in jail" refers to the Christian believers who suffered during this tribulation.
 - a) Those who survived are judged based on how they treated those believers.
20. Verse 41: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
- a) Notice that the "eternal fire" was not primarily designed for people.
 - i) It was designed for the devil and his angels (followers).
 - ii) That also tells me that the devil and his angels are given free will. They choose to willfully disobey Jesus.
 - a) Paul tells us that one day we will judge angels. (1st Corinthians 6:3).
I don't know if that includes this group of demons or not. ☺

- b) Remember that hell is for people who willfully choose not to follow Jesus.
 - c) This is another reason I strongly hold a pre-millennial view.
 - i) I think that during the 7-year tribulation, people will have their last chance to follow Jesus. This judgment here in Verse 41 is right after that 7-year period and I believe it is for those who survive that tribulation period and is based on their belief in Jesus during that time.
 - d) I have heard some commentators suggest that this judgment is more “nationalistic”.
 - i) They argue that the judgment is about the nations that were pro-Jesus, and pro-Israel during this time period. They argue that the “good nations” get to go into the 1,000-year millennial period.
 - ii) While that is possible, my personal view is that the judgment is individual and this is a salvation-issue.
21. Verse 42: For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' ⁴⁴ "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' ⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' ⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."
- a) Verses 42- 46 are almost identical to Verses 35 to 41. The only difference is the first group of verses is in the “positive” tone and the second group is the “negative” tone.
 - b) I think Jesus wanted to make the point real clear that our actions now affect our destiny.
 - c) I also want to emphasize again that while I take the view that this specific judgment is about people who go through the tribulation, there are aspects we need to take seriously as Christians today.
 - i) Jesus wants us to care for other Christians, to help feed the poor and even visit Christians in jail.
 - ii) If Jesus cares about the suffering Christians during that era, and expects others to minister to them, he must also want the same for us today.
 - iii) My point is if these verses are only about the tribulation period, that does not give us the excuse to ignore the poor, ignore the suffering, etc., especially those who also swear allegiance to Jesus.
 - iv) The fact that Jesus spends so many verses on this shows its importance.
22. Here are some wrap-up comments:
- a) The last two chapters is all one speech by Jesus. There are only 3 chapters left in Matthew.
 - i) Those three chapters focus on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.
 - b) One of the things to think about is the fact that Jesus was only days away from the cross.
 - i) Yet he records this long series of prophetic events tied to his second coming.
 - ii) On one hand, it was done to answer the disciples' questions.
 - iii) The disciples, didn't understand the death and resurrection, but somehow, they understood Jesus was “going away” as he kept talking his leaving and returning.
 - c) I personally believe Jesus spent so much time focusing on the events of his Second Coming as a reminder to disciples that all of “this” is worth it.
 - i) Let's face it. They were about to watch their mentor, who they correctly believed to be the Messiah, be tortured and killed.
 - ii) They were about to become outlaws themselves.
 - iii) Jesus gives us the promises, rewards and judgments of His Second Coming to help us focus not on our present moment but on the long-term implications of how we live our life.
 - iv) Paul said it best: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18, NIV)

23. Heavenly Father, May you be gloried in us and through us as we live to do your will. Help us to keep us focused upon your glorious return. Help us to see others not as being inferior, but as those who haven't yet received the grace of God. May we be beacons of light to a dying world. Further, help us to have compassion for people, especially for fellow believers, and commit our time and resources to help those in need. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.