



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 25:1-46

Topic

At His Second Coming Jesus will separate
all nonbelievers for eternal punishment

Title

"Separation Anxiety"

Introduction

It's called jargon. It's the vocabulary that is peculiar to a particular profession, or trade, or group. Some of the words are unique, but others are common words that have taken on a different meaning.

My family owned an automotive repair shop when I was growing up. If my dad told me to take the rotors to be turned, I knew what he was talking about. If my brother diagnosed an engine and said it was dieseling, I knew what he meant.

Hanging around cops, as a Chaplain, I hear a lot of jargon. Your FTO may want you to FI a suspect to be certain they're not 5150.

Wherever you work, there's probably jargon that you take for granted.

We have our own jargon as believers, called by some, Christianese. We might, for example, say that someone came forward and had hands laid on them to receive the anointing. It sounds pretty weird if you aren't familiar with it.

Shepherding is a common occupation in the Bible. It has its own unique jargon. For example, there's an expression, "to pass under the rod." The rod of the shepherd was a two-foot long club that doubled as an instrument by which the shepherd could count and inspect his sheep one-by-one as they passed by him.

At the end of Matthew twenty-five we will read the famous passage where Jesus says that, at His return, He will separate the Gentiles "as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."

In shepherding jargon, they will pass under His rod.

So will the Jews who survive the Tribulation. While there is no direct mention of it in Matthew twenty-five, Jews understood from their Scriptures that one day they, too, would pass under the rod of their Great Shepherd.

They knew the passage in Ezekiel twenty which reads,

Eze 20:34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.

Eze 20:35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face.

Eze 20:36 Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord GOD.

Eze 20:37 **"I will make you pass under the rod,** and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Before You Reign With Jesus In His Kingdom, Israel Will Pass Under The Rod, and #2 Before You Reign With Jesus In His Kingdom, The Gentiles Will Pass Under His Rod.

#1 Before You Reign With Jesus In His Kingdom,
Israel Will Pass Under The Rod

(v1-30)

I snuck something in on you. Who said anything about reigning with Jesus?

It is our teaching that the church age saints will be resurrected and raptured to Heaven before the Tribulation on the earth can begin.

In Revelation 5:9-10, describing the raptured church in Heaven, we read,

Rev 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Rev 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; **And we shall reign on the earth."**

The church is in Heaven in Revelation chapter five. The Tribulation is described, in Revelation chapters six through eighteen. Then, in chapter nineteen, Jesus returns, and we return with Him.

When Jesus returns in His Second Coming, He will establish a real, physical kingdom on the earth, administrated from Jerusalem. It will last one-thousand years, which is why it is sometimes called the Millennial Kingdom.

It is the kingdom that was promised to Israel throughout their Scriptures, but postponed when the leaders of Israel officially rejected Jesus as their King.

I don't know exactly what we will be doing when we "reign on the earth" with Jesus in that kingdom. I have a few of my own ideas about where I'd like to be posted; but that's going to be up to the Lord to determine.

Something to keep in mind; something that often confuses folks when we talk about the coming kingdom on the earth. When Jesus returns, at the end of the Great Tribulation, there are human beings who have survived the terror and carnage of those days. There will be Jews and Gentiles in their human bodies.

These verses are about those future people.

- Those among them who believe in Jesus Christ will remain on the earth and begin to repopulate it. They are compared to sheep.
- Those among them who do not believe in Jesus Christ will be taken away to await their eternal punishment. They are the goats.

By the way, this is one reason why a post-tribulation rapture of the church is impossible. If all the believers on the earth were raptured at the Lord's Second Coming, there would be no human beings left in their natural, non-glorified bodies to repopulate the Millennial Kingdom.

Mat 25:1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Do you remember the '90's sitcom, with puppets, called *Dinosaurs*? The baby used to say to the dad, "*Not the mama!*"

As we encounter the ten virgins, I want to say, "*Not the bride!*"

The ten virgins are, at best, bridesmaids. They are probably more like invited guests. They are *not* the bride of Christ.

Other than a general biblical principle to always be ready, these virgins have nothing to do with the church. The scene Jesus was describing was His Second Coming - not the rapture. The church is raptured, safe in Heaven, at least seven years before the Second Coming.

Once you understand that, the interpretation of the parable itself is relatively straightforward.

Mat 25:2 Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Mat 25:3 Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,

Mat 25:4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

The wedding ceremony was taking place at the home of the bridegroom. The ten unmarried, young, female friends of either the bride or the bridegroom are awaiting the return of the wedding party so they can attend the wedding feast. The custom was to have oil lamps, on poles, by which the invited guests could illuminate the procession.

The lamps themselves did not hold much oil, so it was wise to have an extra supply.

Mat 25:5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

I've officiated at weddings like that. After the ceremony, the guests wait and wait and wait while the wedding party takes its sweet time taking pictures.

Mat 25:6 "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'

Mat 25:7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

Mat 25:8 And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

Mat 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'

They weren't ready. In the story, they're told to try to wake up some shop owner and buy oil. But the point was simply, it's too late to get any oil.

Mat 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

Mat 25:11 "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'

Mat 25:12 But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

From the standpoint of a wedding feast, this seems pretty harsh. However, Jesus wasn't teaching first century wedding etiquette. This is a story to illustrate a single, simple spiritual truth; and that truth is in verse thirteen.

Mat 25:13 "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

We saw, in chapter twenty-four, that this phrase is not referring to the rapture of the church. It refers to the Second Coming of Jesus. For various reasons we gave, it will be impossible to know the exact moment of the Lord's Second Coming.

When He comes, it will be too late for a person to change their eternal destiny.

- Those who were ready - believers who have been anticipating His return - will enter the kingdom.
- Those who were not ready - nonbelievers - will be excluded from the kingdom.

Jesus started with a parable about a wedding feast, because He will be returning with us, His bride, and there will be a celebration on the earth. Revelation 19:9 calls it "the marriage supper of the Lamb."

His next parable gets down to business, because the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth will also be a time of growth and prosperity,

and the Lord will install servants of His in positions of oversight and authority.

Mat 25:14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them.

Mat 25:15 And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

This was a pretty common occurrence in their culture. Notice, in passing, that their lord did not divide his goods evenly. Hold onto that thought.

Mat 25:16 Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

Mat 25:17 And likewise he who had received two gained two more also.

Mat 25:18 But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money.

Mat 25:19 After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.

Mat 25:20 "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.'

Mat 25:21 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Mat 25:22 He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.'

Mat 25:23 His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Mat 25:24 "Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed.

Mat 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

We're going to talk about faithfulness in a moment, but that's not the real point of this parable. When reading the parables it is important to not get bogged down in the details of the story. Details are there so that the story makes sense. The main point is what counts.

The main, single, simple point of the Parable of the Talents is that the servants needed to believe the master was returning, and live accordingly. Their behavior would give evidence of their belief.

Two servants anticipated their lord's return; one did not.

Mat 25:26 "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed.

This is not an admission that their lord was really like this. He was simply repeating back what the servant had said, and, in fact, by doing so, he was showing how foolish an assessment it was.

Mat 25:27 So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest.

Don't miss this. This servant was not afraid; he was, in fact, shrewd.

Why not at least put the money in the bank to earn interest? Because then there would be a record of it. If the master never returned, the third servant could, in fact, simply keep the portion allotted to him, since it was buried in his backyard.

He fully expected that the master would not return; or he hoped he would not; and he acted accordingly.

Mat 25:28 So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.

Mat 25:29 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

Mat 25:30 And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

At His Second Coming, Jesus will appoint servants to oversee and administrate His kingdom.

- Those who are like the first two servants, anticipating the return of the King, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and they will be rewarded with positions of service.
- Those who are like the third servant, certain that the King is not going to return, will be excluded from the Kingdom.

Why do we think these parables are directed to the nation of Israel?

Well, for one thing, there's the passage from Ezekiel I referenced earlier. Jesus was describing His Second Coming and the Jews must, at some point at their Lord's Second Coming, "pass under the rod."

Eze 20:37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

Eze 20:38 I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Charles Lee Feinberg commented on these verses, saying, "This is an exclusive judgment on Israel which will take place during the time of Jacob's Trouble [the Tribulation], probably at the end of the period."

Another reason we think these parables are for Israel are their Jewish tone. For example Gentiles had completely different wedding customs than the ones taken for granted in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. It's not a parable Gentiles would easily identify with.

A final reason we think Jesus had Israel in mind in these opening verses is because He will make a very sharp distinction in the remaining verses between Gentiles and those He calls "My brethren" (v40).

Before we go on, there is something here, a timeless principle applicable to all believers at all times.

God rewards faithfulness. It's something you can be - no matter what you've got to work with.

All men might be created equal, but we certainly do not all have the same talents, abilities, or opportunities to serve the Lord.

There are five-talent Christians... Two-talent Christians... And one-talent Christians.

(You could say the same thing regarding churches).

The Lord commended the two-talent servant for his faithfulness in exactly the same way He commended the five-talent servant.

Nothing is more freeing than for you to realize that God rewards faithfulness. It's something all of us can do - be faithful.

Add to that an honest realization that some churches and Christians really do have more to work with, and you will quit being so depressed when you seem to be accomplishing less than others.

And you'll quit thinking it has anything to do with you when you have more, when really it's all the Lord.

In fact, over the years I've wondered how five-talent Christians would fare if God had given them less.

Be faithful.

#2 Before You Reign With Jesus In His Kingdom, The Gentiles Will Pass Under The Rod

(v31-46)

The judgment that is described in these remaining verses is not a parable. It is a true description of Jesus separating out nonbelievers for eternal punishment, using imagery of sheep passing under the rod of the shepherd.

Mat 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Mat 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

Mat 25:33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

At His return, the Lord will turn His attention to "the nations." It is a term which is mostly used to distinguish non-Jews from Jews.

We believe it definitely has that usage here because in verse forty Jesus contrasts these "nations" with those He calls "My brethren." Clearly there is an ethnic distinction between Gentiles and Jews.

Mat 25:34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Mat 25:35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

Mat 25:36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

Mat 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?'

Mat 25:38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?'

Mat 25:39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'

Mat 25:40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'

Jews will be the special target of satanic persecution during the last three and one-half years of the Great Tribulation. Those who escape to the Judean wilderness when the antichrist defiles the Temple will be supernaturally protected.

Presumably there will be Jews all around the world who will lack that supernatural protection. They will be hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and imprisoned. To help them will give evidence a person is a genuine believer, since they risk being similarly treated.

A person can't be saved by these good works done towards the Jews; but the works will be the evidence they *are* saved - that they are a tribulation saint.

I love the way Jesus identifies with His brethren. Feed them... Clothe them... Visit them... And a person is doing it to Him.

Mat 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

Mat 25:42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;

Mat 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

Mat 25:44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

Mat 25:45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

This is them passing under the rod, to be identified as goats. Jesus reveals their treatment of the Jews, His brethren, desperate for the bare necessities of life, and for human kindnesses.

Sure, it will potentially mean imprisonment or death if a person helps the Jews. But it means eternal punishment to not help.

Again, it isn't the lack of works that condemns, but the lack of genuine faith in Jesus that would produce those works.

In any dispensation - Old Testament, New Testament, Tribulation, or the Kingdom - a person is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. At the Cross you receive the forgiveness of your sins, and God gives you the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Mat 25:46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Only saved Jews... Only saved Gentiles... will be left standing as the Tribulation survivors pass under the rod of Jesus Christ.

They will be the citizens of the Millennial Kingdom, repopulating the planet for the next thousand years.

Even though these verses look to the future, they reveal the Lord as compassionate. He cares for those who are persecuted - and so should we, if we have His heart.

It's always a good spiritual exercise to analyze what we are doing to assist the poor and the persecuted church world-wide.

Yes, there are needs at home; we need to address those. But without a bigger worldview, we will end up spending all our talents on ourselves; and we will implode.

We are in a position to help the poor and persecuted believers. Let's do so, regularly, sacrificially, and joyfully.