

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 22: "Inherit the Kingdom Prepared for You" (Matthew 25)

- Jesus presents the parable of the ten virgins.
- Jesus presents the parable of the talents.
- Jesus presents the parable of the sheep and the goats.

A study of this lesson will help us prepare ourselves for the Second Coming through living righteously, developing our talents, and serving others.

Introduction

Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, in the April general conference of 1951, said of the nearness of the Lord's coming:

I believe that the coming of the Son of God is not far away, how far I do not know, but I do know that it is over one hundred years nearer than it was when Elijah the prophet came to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple on the third day of April, 1836. Elijah's words point to the fact that we are that much nearer. And this ancient prophet declared that by the restoration of those keys we should know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at our doors. (Conference Report, 121st Annual Conference, April, 1951, p. 58.)

The leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from the Prophet Joseph Smith to the present have not attempted to tell the world when the second coming of Christ would be. But they have lifted up a warning voice that His coming is to be in this dispensation, which began in the spring of 1820. That the Lord's coming in power and glory is nearer is clearly evident to all, as stated by President Smith.

this lesson focuses on three parables the Savior taught in response to his Apostles' questions about his Second Coming.

Jesus presents the parable of the ten virgins. (Matthew 25:1-13)

The parable of the ten virgins is based on Jewish wedding customs. In Jesus' time, the bridegroom and his friends would escort the bride from her home to the home of the bridegroom. Along the way, the friends of the bride waited to join them. When they arrived at the bridegroom's home, they all went inside for the wedding. These weddings usually took place in the evening, so those waiting for the bride and bridegroom carried small lamps fueled by oil.

In the parable of the ten virgins, the

bridegroom represents The Savior. The virgins represent members of the Church. The wedding represents the Savior's Second Coming. The oil in the lamps represents preparation for the Second Coming.

Matt. 25:3 teaches that five of the virgins did that which was foolish—failing to be properly prepared.

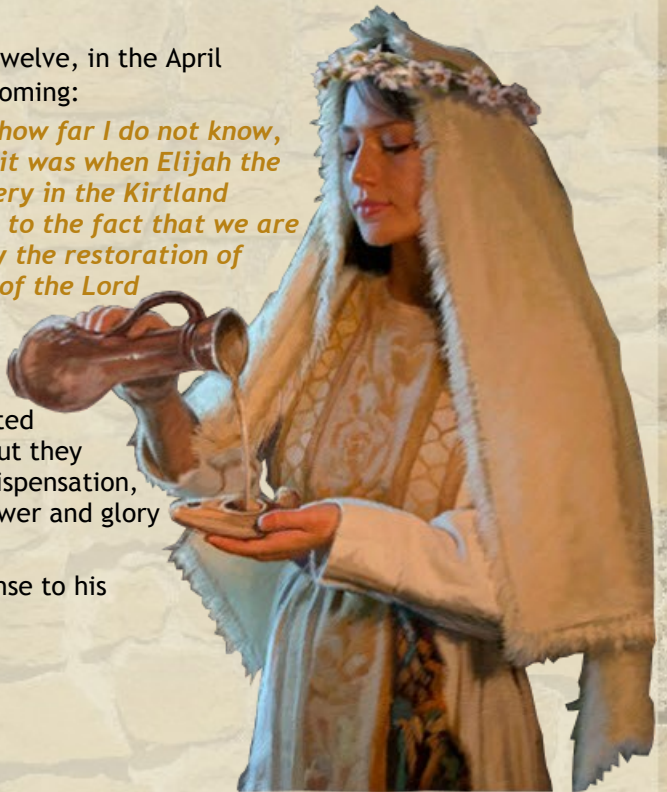
Matt. 25:8-12 shows the consequences of their lack of preparation. Sometimes we make the same error as the foolish virgins.

Matt, 25:4 Five of the virgins did

that which was wise—preparing for future need.

Matt. 25:10 shows the consequences of their preparation. We can learn from the actions of the five wise virgins and from D&C 45:56-57 that we must prepare ourselves for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

NEXT WEEK:
#23 "Love One Another, As I Have Loved You" (Luke 22:1-38; John 13-15)



Keeping in mind that the oil in the parable represents preparation for the Second Coming, we can add “oil” to our “lamps” by observing righteous living practices, such as exercising faith, receiving ordinances, keeping covenants, or giving service.

President Spencer W. Kimball: “In the parable, oil can be purchased at the market. In our lives the oil of preparedness is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living.

Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with

which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps” (Faith Precedes the Miracle [1972], 256).

For application of this lesson’s principles, consider your answers to these questions: What did you do this past week to add oil to your lamp? What are some things you will do this coming week to add oil to your lamp?

Jesus presents the parable of the talents. (Matthew 25:14–30)

In New Testament times, a talent was a sum of money (Bible Dictionary, “Money,” 733–34).

In the parable of the talents, the man traveling to a far country represents the Lord. The servants represent each of us. The talents represent gifts from God.



Matt. 25:16–17 records what the servants who were given five talents and two talents did with the money.

Matt. 25:21, 23 tell us the reward they both received—each being praised and being given greater blessings for their faithful, prudent actions.

This parable teaches this principle about the eternal reward our Heavenly Father will bless us with—that people who seem to have fewer gifts from God will receive every blessing if they use their gifts to the fullest.

Elder James E. Faust said of those who seem to have received fewer talents: “**If their talents are used to build the kingdom of God and serve others, they will fully enjoy the promises of the Savior. The**

great promise of the Savior is that they ‘shall receive [their] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come’ (D&C 59:23)” (Ensign, May 1994, 6).

Matt. 25:24–25 records what the servant who was given one talent did with the money.

Matt. 25:26–30 details his master’s judgment and condemnation for the servant’s unwise stewardship.

Sometimes we fail to develop the talents and gifts God has given us, but we can overcome obstacles to developing these gifts.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton taught that “**it is our right and responsibility to accept our gifts and to share them**” (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 20).

To benefit from this lesson, consider how you can recognize and accept the talents or gifts the Lord has entrusted to you. Then, think about why it is important to share your talents or gifts. Further, consider the blessings have come into your life because you have developed and shared your talents or gifts. Finally, ponder the blessings that have come to you because others have shared their talents or gifts.

D&C 46:11–12 Every person has been given at least one gift from God, but some gifts are easier to recognize than others. Consider some of the gifts that might be difficult to recognize but that can be used to serve others and glorify God...

Elder Marvin J. Ashton said: “**Let me mention a few gifts that are not always evident or noteworthy but that are very important. Among these may be your gifts—gifts not so evident but nevertheless real and valuable. “Let us review some of these less-conspicuous gifts: the gift of asking; the gift of listening; the gift of hearing and using a still, small voice; the gift of being able to weep; the gift of avoiding contention; the gift of being agreeable; the gift of avoiding vain repetition; the gift of seeking that which is righteous; the gift of not passing judgment; the gift of looking to God for guidance; the gift of being a disciple; the gift of caring for others; the gift of being able to ponder; the gift of offering prayer; the gift of bearing a mighty testimony; and the gift of receiving the Holy Ghost”** (Ensign, Nov. 1987, 20).

To help you really actively apply the principles of this lesson, take a pen or pencil and a piece of paper. Write down one or two of your talents or gifts along with at least one specific thing you will do in the next few weeks to use them in the service of others. Remember, as we develop the talents or gifts God has given us, we add oil to our lamps.

Jesus presents the parable of the sheep and the goats. (Matthew 25:31-46)

Matt. 25:31-32 Jesus taught that at his Second Coming he will separate us as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Matt. 25:33-34 In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the sheep represent faithful followers.

Matt. 25:33, 41 - here, the goats represent those who did not follow the Savior in their actions.

Matt. 25:35-46 This parable teaches that we must prepare for the Second Coming and the day of judgment wherein we will be held accountable for our actions and motivation.

Elder Marion D. Hanks said: *“Jesus taught his followers the parable of the sheep and the goats, representing the judgment to come, in*

which he clearly identified those who will inherit ‘life eternal’ and those who will ‘go away into everlasting punishment’ (Matt. 25:46). The key difference was that those who should inherit the kingdom with him had developed the habit of helping, had experienced the joy of giving and the satisfaction of serving. They had responded to the needs of the hungry, thirsty, homeless, the naked, the sick, and those in prison. ... “Nothing would seem more clear than the high premium the Savior put upon selfless service to others as an indispensable element of Christian conduct and of salvation. Helping, giving, and sacrificing are, or should be, as natural as growing and breathing” (Ensign, May 1992, 9).

As we serve others, we add oil to our lamps. We also may help others add oil to their own lamps.

We should remember that we bless others by our service and serving another person blesses us. Consider also how you feel about those you serve and how you feel about those who serve you.

Matt. 25:40 gives us an opportunity to consider what the Savior meant when he said, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”. (See also Mosiah 2:17).

Conclusion

The Savior's Second Coming is near at hand. Though we do not know the day or the time, it is imperative that we do not procrastinate our preparation. We must be diligent in keeping our lamps filled by keeping the commandments, developing our talents, and giving service to others.

