

STUDY 8



The transforming touch of Heaven

Sunday 10th June 2018

Reading – Matthew 25

8. THE STORIES OF THE KINGDOM (Part 2).

There is the 'now' and the 'not yet' of the kingdom. The kingdom has come but it has not yet come in its fullness. Jesus taught through the extensive use of parables. Many of them are about the present kingdom (Part 1 study No 6) that has broken in through Jesus' coming and ministry. The kingdom is here and it is advancing. Yet, we still long for fullness of the kingdom that is captured in the prayer '*thy kingdom come.*' The parables in our study today are emphasising the challenge of living in the in-between period of time until Jesus returns and the Kingdom is complete.

Reflect upon the illustration of Oscar Cullmann who referred to the significant days of the last World War – D Day and V Day...where D Day decided the outcome of the war but the mopping up operation continued through to V Day.

'We live between God's D Day and God's V Day.'

THE 'NOW' OF THE KINGDOM IS LIKE YEAST – Matthew 13.33

This is a regular daily household picture in the first century of bread being made.

A little yeast goes a long way and transforms the whole lump of dough. Why not enjoy some matzo bread (no yeast) for your group refreshments!

- How do you see yeast as picture of the transforming power of Christ and the kingdom in your own life and in the wider world?

Do not underestimate the power of the kingdom – it might start from small beginnings but it infiltrates every corner of this world.

THE 'NOT YET' OF THE KINGDOM IS LIKE A FISHING NET - Matthew 13.47-50

Nothing in the sea escapes the dragnet that picks up everything – good fish to be kept and much that is to be discarded.

- What does this tell us about the consummation of the kingdom and the inevitable judgement?
- We are called to be 'fishers of men', what are the challenges in this parable for us in sharing the gospel?

1. KINGDOM COME – LET'S WAIT – THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH GIRLS

Matthew 25.1-13

Again we have Jesus taking a typical village scene of a wedding about to take place where the timing of the whole event is uncertain.

- Who has been to a wedding lately – timing of the wedding is always a bit of guess work even in the 21st Century!
- What is the role of these girls? What is the difference between those called wise and the others who were foolish?
- In what way does this parable challenge us about being prepared for Christ's return and the importance of the oil?

The waiting theme is further addressed in Habakkuk 2.2-3; 2 Pet 3.3-4; 2 Cor 11.2; 1 Thess 4.15-17. The Church is described as the Bride of Christ. There is a marriage that is to take place!

2. KINGDOM COME – LET’S WORK – THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matthew 25.14-30

Jesus is coming back again and it is not just a case of waiting but also working!

A talent is a portion of money – could be the equivalent of 100 days wages, so work it out yourself and imagine yourself in the story.

- If the Lord returned, what would he hope to find us doing? How does this familiar parable encourage us to be always ready and waiting for his coming?
- We have three servants, in what ways do they respond to the Master? In what way does this highlight the reality of their relationship with the Master?
- We have been entrusted with many different resources; in what way are we called to make good investments?

If you have time before your group meeting, take the opportunity to pray through the parable and ask God to further reveal to you some of the resources he has given to you for kingdom use.

Other verses that could be considered – Luke 12.48; Romans 12.3

3. KINGDOM COME – LET’S WITNESS – THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP & GOATS

Matthew 25.31-46

We have the scene pictured of the nations gathered before the judgement seat of Christ.

- What are some of the challenges that we face personally and corporately as a church in this parable?
- How do you understand the place of rewards as indicated in this parable?
- God will not forget the work that you have done, Hebrews 6.10. There is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus where this is underlined in Luke 16.25.

There is a hell that has been created by God – the place of separation from his presence. The final parable in Matthew’s gospel has a very sobering message. Let us always be reminded of Genesis 18.25 *Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

FOR YOUR NOTES