



The Context of the Parable of the 10 Virgins

John R Ecob D.D.

The context of any passage of Scripture is most important in determining the right interpretation and the parable of the ten virgins is no exception. Often we find this parable is applied to people in this Church age whereas the context is Jewish and pre-Church. The context is the message of the Olivet Discourse.

The Olivet Discourse is preceded by the Lord's statement,

"Behold your house (Israel's) is left unto you desolate...Ye shall not see me henceforth TILL ye shall say, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt.23:38-39).

The Olivet Discourse is an answer to three questions:

1. When will the Temple be destroyed?
2. What is the sign of thy coming?
3. What is the sign of the "end of the age" (the 70th week of Israel's prophetic history as described in Daniel chapter 9 and verse 27). It is the same period that is known as "the Day of the Lord" or the Great Tribulation.

First, the Lord told the Jewish disciples what **NOT** to interpret as a sign of the end of the age in

Matt.24:4-6. In verse 6 He said, "The end is NOT YET" i.e. There would always be "wars and rumours of wars" and since the time of Simon bar Kokba (AD132 - 135), there have been many false Christs who have claimed to be the Messiah.

The 7-year Tribulation Described Beginning at verse 7, Jesus chronologically described the events immediately preceding His 2nd advent (Matt.24:7 to 28). This short period is Daniel's 70th week which is the final 7 years before Christ returns and the nation of Israel enters into the blessing of the millennial kingdom of Christ.

The first half (42 months) of the Tribulation is described in Matt.24:7 to 14 and Jesus said this was "the beginning of sorrows" (Matt.24:8). "Sorrows" is literally, Israel's "travail" when the nation will experience the new birth under the New Covenant.

Isaiah 66:8 states:

"As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children".

The 144,000 ("firstfruits" of Israel, Rev 14:4) will preach the Gospel of the kingdom in all the world in the face of intense persecution. Israel's conversion is in the **first half** of the 70th week when the Russian/ Islamic invasion of Ezek.38/39

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE (Addressed to Israel)

3 Questions: The sign when the Temple is destroyed? 2) The sign of the end of the Age?

3) The sign of Christ's Return?

MATTHEW 24 AND 25

24:4-6 There will be wars...but the end is NOT YET

vs:7-14 The beginning of Israel's travail. Global warfare, famines, pestilence, earthquakes. Israel saved when invaded by Russia and Muslims. Hated of all nations for Jesus' sake as 144,000 Jews preach Gospel of the kingdom in all the world. The seal and trumpet judgments fall.

24:15-20 Antichrist moves into the Temple and sets up his idol; the "abomination of desolation". Israel flees into wilderness

24:21-28 Great Tribulation as Antichrist demands worship. The **vial (bowl) judgments** poured out and human life in danger of extinction. False Christs.

24:27-31; 25:1-30 Christ returns and smites the nations. Sun and moon darkened and nations mourn. Israel (God's elect nation) is regathered. **Three signs:** Conversion of Israel (fig tree), days of Noah, and missing persons. **Three parables** are warnings to Israel to be ready: The 10 Virgins, the faithful servant, and the talents.

25:31-46 All surviving nations gathered before the throne of glory. The saved Gentiles (sheep) inherit the kingdom and the unsaved Gentiles cast into the lake of fire

LUKE 21

21:8-9 There will be wars...but the end is NOT YET. 21:12-24 But BEFORE all these (Tribulation), Apostles persecuted, Jerusalem besieged and destroyed. Jews scattered till times of Gentiles fulfilled (2nd Coming).

21:10-11 Global warfare, famines, pestilence, fearful sights and great signs in the heavens

21:25-26 Signs in sun, moon and stars. Distress of nations, sea and waves roaring. Men will fear as the powers of the heavens are shaken.

25:27-36 Christ returns visibly in a cloud. When Israel sees these things begin to come to pass they are to look up, their redemption is near. The generation that sees the Tribulation will see Christ return therefore watch because it will be like a snare on whole earth.

The Church Age

First half of the Tribulation

Middle of the Tribulation

Second half of the Tribulation

Second Advent of Christ

After Christ Returns

7 years - the end of the age

70th week of Daniel

takes place and Israel is saved "from *THAT DAY* and forward" (Ezek.39:22-29).

The middle of the 70th week is described in Matt.24:15-19 when Antichrist reveals his true character and makes his palace in the "holy mount" (Dan.11:45). This is the "abomination of desolation" which will "stand in the holy place" of the Tribulation Temple.

The second half of the 70th week is described in Matt.24:20-28 and Jesus called it "great tribulation" (Matt.24:21).

The Return of the Lord in glory and power follows in Matt.24:29-31:

"Immediately AFTER the Tribulation of those days...".

When the Lord returns, the first thing He will do is gather Israel, "his elect (Israel), from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other" (Matt.24:31).

The Parable of the Fig Tree

The parable of the fig tree follows in verses 32-35 and this teaches us that when Israel sees "all these things" (i.e. The Tribulation previously described) they will know that the 2nd Advent is "NIGH even at the doors". The generation that sees "ALL THESE THINGS" (the Tribulation) will see the Lord return.

The fig tree bears fruit BEFORE its leaves appear and since the fig tree is a symbol of Israel we suggest that the conversion of Israel to Jesus

Christ will be a sign that the end of the age has arrived.

Obviously this cannot apply to Christians in the Church age because **we won't be here to see all these things**. It must apply to ISRAEL in the Tribulation.

Signs of the End of the Age for Israel

Verses 36 to 44 describe SIGNS for ISRAEL as to **when** the "end of the age" (the 70th week) will BEGIN. Those days will be like the days of Noah AND there will be a sudden global disappearance of individuals.

"One shall be taken (lit.received to oneself) and the other left (put away or rejected).

The Lord did NOT say this disappearance was the rapture of the Christians because the **Church did not exist at that time**. The revelation of the Church was a mystery *hidden* in ages past and first revealed to the Apostle Paul (Eph.3:1-9; 1Cor.15:51-54). The SIGN to Israel that the end of the age has come will be the sudden, global disappearance of people which we now know is the rapture of the CHURCH. No doubt the 144,000 Jewish witnesses who are sealed immediately after the Rapture, will realize that also.

The Bride is NOT mentioned in the parable of the virgins because Israel will be **the guests** at the marriage supper when the Lord returns. Nevertheless when Christ

The Context of the Parable of 10 Virgins

comes for His bride, the Church will disappear and Israel will know that the “*end of the age*” has come.

Three Parables Warn Israel to be Ready and Watch

From Matt.24:45 to 25:30 we have three parables of **the kingdom** which will be preached by the 144,000 Jewish witnesses. They are:

A) The faithful and wise servant.

B) The wise and foolish virgins.

C) The talents given to faithful and wicked servants.

ALL OF THESE parables teach ONE THING to Israel. WATCH! WATCH! WATCH! - Be ready for the coming of the Lord!

God has entrusted great treasures (talents) to the nation of Israel for this world (Romans 9:4-5; 3:1-4).

Israel is God’s servant nation but within Israel there are saved Jews and unsaved Jews. There are faithful servants and evil servants/ wise virgins and foolish virgins/ faithful servants and wicked servants. It is not possible for any person who is a part of the bride of Christ to be cut asunder and receive his

“portion with the hypocrites” where there is *“weeping and gnashing of teeth”* (Matt.24:51).

These parables are telling the Jews to WATCH, BE READY, BE SAVED AND BE FAITHFUL because **if they are not saved** they will be cut asunder where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt.24:51).

Judgment of the Living Nations

The final part of the Olivet Discourse is the separation of the living nations that survive the Tribulation.

There are **three groups of people** on earth when Christ returns: i) The Lord’s brethren (Israel who are all saved), ii) the sheep (saved Gentiles from the Tribulation) and iii) the goats (Unsaved Gentiles from the Tribulation).

To the sheep Jesus will say, *“Inherit the kingdom”* and to the goats He will say, *“Depart from me into everlasting fire”* (Matt.25:41).

There will be a literal kingdom on earth (Matt.25:34) and the Lord’s brethren, together with the saved Gentiles, will INHERIT THE KINGDOM.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

In view of the context I believe we should interpret the parable of the 10 virgins as a warning to Israel to watch and be ready for the coming of the Lord AND the end of the age.

The bride is not mentioned in the parable but she must be there because the bridegroom comes for His bride. However, the parable is **addressed to** those who would be **the guests** at the marriage supper which occurs on earth AFTER Christ returns in glory (Rev.19:7-9).

The arrival of the bridegroom at the midnight hour is the occasion when the bridegroom comes **for His bride** and it is this that awakens the ten virgins.

There is no doubt that the rapture of the Church will awaken 144,000 Jews to preach the Gospel of the kingdom in all the world (Rev.7:1-3), but these are only the "firstfruits" of Israel and the conversion of the remainder of the nation will occur, possibly 2 years later, when the "northern army" of Russia and Islam sweeps through the land of Israel (Joel 2:20; Ezek.38/39) slaying two thirds of the people (Zech.13:8-9).

This explains why there are foolish virgins as well as wise virgins. All of the wise virgins will be in attendance at the Marriage supper of the Lamb but the foolish perish.

It is interesting that Scripture says of the 144,000:

"These are they which were not defiled with women; FOR THEY ARE VIRGINS. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev.14:4).

The timing of the parable must be located at **the beginning of the Tribulation** because it describes the events when the bridegroom comes FOR HIS BRIDE which is the Rapture, but the message of the parable is to the guests; Israel. Jews who are saved **before the rapture** will be a part of the bride but those on earth after the rapture will be either wise or foolish. The 144,000 will be wise and will heed

the warning of the midnight call to the bride to "come up hither" to the Father's house. Also, the remnant who repent at the time of the Russian/Islamic invasion will be wise but those Jews who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as Messiah, Saviour and Lord, will perish and not be admitted as guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The parable of the virgins is further proof that **the rapture must occur BEFORE the Tribulation** for it is a sign to Israel that the "end of the age" (the Tribulation) **has begun**.

It indicates TO US that the Bridegroom will come BEFORE the "end of the age" and the sudden disappearance of people over the earth will be the disappearance of the Church. That will be the cry to ISRAEL, to "go ye out to meet him". That will be the message of the 144,000 who preach the Gospel of the KINGDOM i.e. that THE KING IS COMING WITH HIS BRIDE "immediately AFTER the Tribulation of those days".

Today Israel is blinded. "God hath given them **the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see**" (Rom.11:8) but when the trump of God shall sound to call the bride to the Father's house, **Israel will awake** and those who have the oil of the Holy Spirit will attend the marriage supper of the Lamb when Christ returns WITH His bride.