# Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 38 – February 7<sup>th</sup> – Matthew 25:1-30

## Works frequently referenced in these notes on Matthew

Hagner, Donald A Word Biblical Commentary Vols.33a & 33b: Matthew 1-13 & Matthew 14-

28, Word Books, Dallas, 1993 & 1995

Morris, Leon The Gospel According to Matthew, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992

## Matthew 25:1

Τότε όμοιωθήσεται ή βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν δέκα παρθένοις, αἴτινες λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν ἐξῆλθον εἰς ὑπάντησιν τοῦ νυμφίου.

## τοτε then, at that time

A link with the context spoken of previously i.e. the time of Christ's return.

όμοιοω make like; pass resemble, be like

This phrase is similar to that of 13:24; 18:23; 22:2 "but employs the future tense because of its eschatological orientation (cf. 7:24, 26)." Hagner.

βασιλεια, ας f see 24:7 δεκα ten παρθενος, ου f virgin, unmarried girl όστις, ήτις, ό τι who, which λαβοῦσαι Verb, aor act ptc, f nom pl λαμβανω λαμπας, αδος f lamp, lantern

Morris suggests that this is not a lamp (which would be  $\lambda \nu \chi \nu \sigma \varsigma$ ), but a 'torch'. He cites evidence to suggest that these may have been sticks with cloth wrapped around the top of them and soaked in olive oil.

έαυτος, έαυτη, έαυτον him/her/itself ύπαντησις, εως f meeting (εἰς ὑ to meet) νυμφιος, ου m bridegroom

Some MSS (D  $\Theta$   $f^{l}$  lat sy) add και της νυμφης 'and the bride,' perhaps because copyists had in mind the bridegroom bringing the bride to his home for the wedding.

Our understanding of what is going on here is hampered by lack of detailed knowledge of wedding customs of the first century. It would seem that the ten girls belonged to the bride's party and were to go and meet the bridegroom's party. The girls would then have taken their place in the procession to the bridegroom's home for the feast.

#### Verse 2

πέντε δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἦσαν μωραὶ καὶ πέντε φρόνιμοι.

πεντε (indeclinable) five μωρος, α, ον foolish φρονιμος, ον wise, sensible

#### Verse 3

αί γὰρ μωραὶ λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔλαβον μεθ' ἐαυτῶν ἔλαιον·

λαβοῦσαι see v.1 ἐλαιον, ου n olive oil, oil

"Jeremias points out that it was necessary to pour oil on the rags at the end of the torches to get them to burn brightly, but these girls had not bothered to bring the necessary oil. He says, 'their negligence can no longer be judged as lack of foresight excusable by the unexpectedly long delay of the bridegroom. It must be judged as inexcusable, punishable carelessness.' The rags would have been oily to start with, but in a society where people set little store on punctuality and where preparations for a wedding were extensive and time-consuming, this might well not be enough. It was foolish to think that the amount of oil the rags in a torch could hold would be sufficient." Morris.

Trench comments, "By the foolish virgins are meant, not hypocrites, nor self-conscious dissemblers, much less openly profane and ungodly, but the negligent in prayer, the slothful in work, and all those whose scheme of a Christian life is laid out rather to satisfy the eyes of men than to please him that seeth in secret. Nor is it that they are wholly without oil; they have some, but not enough ... it was not that there was no faith, but only that *fides temporaria* which could not endure temptation, nor survive delay." Trench likens the foolish virgins to those in the parable of the sower who lacked depth of soil.

Hagner comments, "The parable should not be allegorized to the extent that an equivalent to the oil is pursued (contra Garland, who follows Donfried in understanding the oil as referring to good works). The focus of the parable is the simple matter of preparedness versus unpreparedness and the tragic character of the latter."

### Verse 4

αί δὲ φρόνιμοι ἔλαβον ἔλαιον ἐν τοῖς ἀγγείοις μετὰ τῶν λαμπάδων ἑαυτῶν.

ἀγγειον, ου n container, vessel

#### Verse 5

χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἐνύσταξαν πᾶσαι καὶ ἐκάθευδον.

χρονιζω spend a long time, delay νυμφιος, ου m see v.1 ἐνύσταξαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl νυσταζω grow drowsy καθευδω sleep

Of the sleeping, Morris says, "This is not to be regarded as reprehensible; Jesus speaks no word of blame for the sleepers. In the circumstances to sleep was a good idea. All their preparations had been made, and from the time the bridegroom made his appearance they would be kept busy for a long time. To sleep while they could was an opportunity not to be missed." Hagner similarly comments, "No fault is attached to the wise for falling asleep (elsewhere 'sleep' stands in obvious tension with 'watching'; cf. 26:38–41; Mark 13:36; 1 Thess 5:6, but note v. 10). Their preparedness lies in their having brought sufficient oil for their lamps."

## Verse 6

μεσος, η, ον middle νυξ, νυκτος f night κραυγη, ης f shout, cry γέγονεν Verb, perf act indic, 3s γινομαι

Someone had seen the bridegroom's party in the distance and had raised a cry.

νυμφιος, ου m see v.1 ἀπαντησις, εως f meeting

Literally, 'go out for meeting of him' i.e. 'go out to meet him'. This noun is used of the official welcome of dignitaries.

### Verse 7

τότε ἠγέρθησαν πᾶσαι αἱ παρθένοι ἐκεῖναι καὶ ἐκόσμησαν τὰς λαμπάδας ἑαυτῶν.

τοτε see v.1

ἠγέρθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl έγειρω raise

έκεινος, η, ο that, those κοσμεω adorn, put in order

The charred ends of the rag or reed wick would be trimmed and further oil added.

λαμπας, αδος f see v.1

### Verse 8

αί δὲ μωραὶ ταῖς φρονίμοις εἶπαν· Δότε ἡμῖν ἐκ τοῦ ἐλαίου ὑμῶν, ὅτι αἱ λαμπάδες ἡμῶν σβέννυνται.

μωρος, α, ον see v.2 φρονιμος, ον see v.2 δότε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl διδωμι ἐλαιον, ου n see v.3 σβέννυνται Verb, pres pass indic, 3 pl σβεννυμι extinguish, put out

Morris says that it is not necessary to hold that the torches had been kept going while they slept. Rather, as they got their torches ready, so those with no oil could not get them to burn effectively – they kept going out.

### Verse 9

ἀπεκρίθησαν δὲ αἱ φρόνιμοι λέγουσαι· Μήποτε οὐ μὴ ἀρκέση ἡμῖν καὶ ὑμῖν· πορεύεσθε μᾶλλον πρὸς τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ ἀγοράσατε ἑαυταῖς.

ἀποκρινομαι answer, reply, say μηποτε lest, otherwise

There are some textual differences here. The clause is introduced with μηποτε, but this is followed either by the simple negative οὖκ (with x A L Z f13 etc.) or the more emphatic double negative οὐ μη (B C D K etc.). On μηποτε Baur, Arndt and Gingrich's Dictionary says, "Sometimes the negation is weakened to such a degree that μηποτε introduces something conjectural probably, perhaps." This suggests that with the reading οὐκ the translation should be "perhaps there may not be enough." But if the reading with the double negative οὐ μη is accepted, "The tone is sharper"; it translates "certainly there would never be enough." This difference is reflected in the translations.

ἀρκέση Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἀρκεω be enough, be sufficient πορευομαι go μαλλον adv rather, instead πωλεω sell, barter ἀγοραζω buy

To speculate over whether the wise should have shared their oil with the foolish is to miss the point of the parable which is focussed on the need for readiness.

### Verse 10

ἀπερχομένων δὲ αὐτῶν ἀγοράσαι ἦλθεν ὁ νυμφίος, καὶ αἱ ἕτοιμοι εἰσῆλθον μετ' αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς γάμους, καὶ ἐκλείσθη ἡ θύρα.

έτοιμος, η, ον ready, prepared, present εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in γαμος, ου m wedding, wedding feast ἐκλείσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s κλειω shut, shut up, lock θυρα, ας f door, gate

Trench quotes the author of an ancient homily on this parable who states that this door, "is now open to those coming from the east and from the west, that they may now sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" It is "that Door which saith, him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. Behold how it is now open, which shall then be closed evermore. Murderers come, and they are admitted; publicans and harlots come, and they are received; unclean and adulterers and robbers, and whosover is of this kind, come, and the door doth not deny itself to them; for Christ, the Door, is infinite in pardon, reaching beyond every degree and every amount of wickedness. But then, what saith He? 'The door is shut.' No one's penitence, no one's prayer, no one's groaning shall any more be admitted. That door is shut which received Aaron after his idolatry, which admitted David after his adultery, after his homicide, which did not repel Peter after his threefold denial." Cf. Isa 22:22; Luke 13:35; Rev 3:7.

### Verse 11

ὕστερον δὲ ἔρχονται καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ παρθένοι λέγουσαι· Κύριε κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν·

ύστερον adv afterwards, then, later λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other ἀνοιγω open

"They have no lack of desire to be numbered among the guests." Morris.

For Κύριε κύριε see 7:21-22.

## Verse 12

ό δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς.

Cf. 7:23.

άποκριθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s ἀποκρινομαι οἰδα know

"If we reason that no bridegroom would say that he did not know some of the invited guests, we miss the sting in the story. Jesus is not telling a story about something that actually happened; he is warning people of the dreadful fate of those who know that they should be watching for the coming of the Son of man but do not do this. Thereby they exclude themselves from any place among the people of God. The Saviour cannot recognise them among the saved." Morris. Ridderbos similarly says that the language is of a disowning of those who, at the last, are 'outside'; "He will deny that there is any bond, any personal relationship, between Him and them ... He has nothing to do with them."

### Verse 13

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γρηγορεῖτε οὖν, ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἡμέραν οὐδὲ τὴν ὥραν.

γρηγορεω be or keep awake, be alert  $\dot{\omega}$ ρα,  $\alpha\varsigma$  f hour, moment

Many MSS (C<sup>3</sup> f<sup>13</sup> TR vg<sup>mss</sup>) add ἐν ἡ ὁ υίος του ἀνθρωπου ἐρχεται an obvious conforming of the text to 24:44.

### **Verses 14-30**

There are similarities with the parable in Luke 19:11-27, but also significant differences. It is best to see them as two distinct parables but with a similar theme. N.T. Wright (Jesus and the Victory of God) comments, "It is highly likely that Jesus used such stories like this on numerous occasions (not just 'twice', as cautious conservative exegetes used to suggest). There is no reason whatever to insist that either Matthew's or Luke's version was 'derived' from the other, or both from a single original." For further notes on Wright's approach to this parable, see extensive notes at the head of Luke 19:11. Wright argues that these parables are not about Jesus departure for glory and eventual second coming but are about YHWH's return to Zion, now being acted out in Jesus' approach to Jerusalem.

## Verse 14

Υσπερ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ὑπάργοντα αὐτοῦ,

ώσπερ as, even as, just as

An abrupt introduction meaning, "the Kingdom of heaven is like ..."

ἀποδημεω leave (home) on a journey, go away

ίδιος, α, ov one's own  $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\iota\delta\omega\mu\iota \ \ hand\ or\ give\ over$ 

 $\dot{\nu}$ παρχ $\omega$  be at one's disposal (τα  $\dot{\nu}$ . possessions).

### Verse 15

καὶ ῷ μὲν ἔδωκεν πέντε τάλαντα ῷ δὲ δύο ῷ δὲ ἔν, ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν. εὐθέως

εδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδωμι πεντε (indeclinable) five ταλαντον, ου n talent

The 'talent' is a measure of weight, the largest weight in normal use (see 18:24). It is difficult to be certain of its monetary value (it would depend on the material concerned) but it was a considerable sum. Hagner suggests that one talent may have been about 6,000 denarii, i.e. 20 years wages of a common labourer. The contemporary use of the word *talent* to mean a gift or ability would seem to be derived from this parable.

δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυσιν two είς, μια, έν gen ένος, μιας, ένος one έκαστος, η, ον each, every δυναμις, εως f power, strength, ability

The master gave no specific instructions to the servants. He left their stewardship to their own initiative. But he clearly expected them to carry on his business. This too is part of the discipline of discipleship: we do not have detailed daily instructions from heaven.

εὐθεως adv straightway, immediately

MSS punctuation (which is non-original) and commentators differ as to whether  $\varepsilon \vartheta \varepsilon \omega \zeta$  belongs at the end of the preceding sentence (AV) or at the beginning of the next (NIV). Metzger points out that elsewhere in Matthew  $\varepsilon \vartheta \varepsilon \omega \zeta$  (or  $\varepsilon \vartheta \varepsilon \vartheta \varepsilon$ ) always goes with what follows. Morris adopts this view. Jesus is telling us that the first servant immediately set to work with what he was given. So Hagner who comments that it "indicates the proper urgency with which the first disciple goes about his business."

# Verse 16

πορευθεὶς ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν ἡργάσατο ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα πέντε:

πορευθείς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s πορευομαι go λαβων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s λαμβανω ήργάσατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s έργαζομαι work, do, perform

We are not told what he did. The important point is that he put the money to work. In doing so he may have risked loss as well as gain.

ἐκέρδησεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s κερδαινω gain, win, profit

### Verse 17

ώσαύτως ὁ τὰ δύο ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα δύο  $\dot{\omega}$  όσαυτως adv in the same way, likewise Many MSS (A  $C^3$  W  $\Theta$   $f^{1,13}$  TR  $\mathrm{sy}^\mathrm{h}$  and D, but before the verb) add και αὐτος after ἐκέρδησεν

### Verse 18

ό δὲ τὸ εν λαβὼν ἀπελθὼν ὤρυξεν γῆν καὶ ἔκρυψεν τὸ ἀργύριον τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ.

όρυσσω dig, dig a hole in γη, γης f earth κρυπτω hide, conceal, cover ἀργυριον, ου n silver coin, money, silver

"The important thing for the man was that the money was secure and that he could produce it when the time came. Keeping it in this way meant that there was no possibility of loss, but it also meant that there was no possibility of gain." Morris.

It is not sufficient to be a *conservative* Evangelical: not sufficient merely to keep or to maintain the faith. The Gospel is to be propagated rather than merely being preserved.

### Verse 19

μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον ἔρχεται ὁ κύριος τῶν δούλων ἐκείνων καὶ συναίρει λόγον μετ' αὐτῶν

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου  $\,i)$  much, many

χρονος, ου m time, period of time

μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον "gives the servants sufficient time to work with the money but also reflects the delay of the parousia of the Son of Man, also the topic of 24:48; 25:5." Hagner.

ἐκεινος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, those συναιρω settle; σ. λογον settle accounts

## Verse 20

καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν προσήνεγκεν ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα λέγων· Κύριε, πέντε τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας· ἴδε ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα.

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach λαβων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s λαμβανω προσήνεγκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s προσφερω offer, present, bring ἀλλος, η, ον another, other παρέδωκας Verb, aor act indic, 2 s παραδιδωμι see v.14

### Verse 21

ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ· Εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου.

ἔφη Verb, imperf act ind, 3s φημι say εὐ adv well; well done!

"Or we could understand it as an interjection, Bravo!" Morris.

ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy, reliable

Cassirer translates "excellent and trustworthy servant."

όλιγος, η, ov little, small; pl. few

The servant may not have thought 100 years wages of a labouring man a 'small thing'!

ης Verb, imperfect indic, 2 s είμι σε Pronoun, acc s συ καταστήσω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s καθιστημι put in charge, appoint

Maybe, in context, to take the ten talents to the market.

εἴσελθε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in γαρα, ας f joy, gladness

Could be, "Share your master's joy." Cf. Heb 12:22.

# Verse 22

προσελθὼν δὲ καὶ ὁ τὰ δύο τάλαντα εἶπεν· Κύριε, δύο τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας· ἴδε ἄλλα δύο τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα.

See v.20

### Verse 23

ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ· Εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου.

### See v.21

Though he had gained only two talents he receives identical praise. "The outward size of their gain was not as important as the fact that each had doubled the amount entrusted to him." Morris.

### Verse 24

προσελθών δὲ καὶ ὁ τὸ εν τάλαντον εἰληφώς εἶπεν· Κύριε, ἔγνων σε ὅτι σκληρὸς εἶ ἄνθρωπος, θερίζων ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρας καὶ συνάγων ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας·

εἰληφως Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s λαμβανω ἔγνων Verb, aor act indic, 1 s γινωσκω σε Pronoun, acc s συ σκληρος, α, ον hard, stern "The expansion he gives of this description fits closely with what we know of ancient landowning aristocracies, such as those that held sway in first-century Palestine, as well as with what we know of the behaviour of ruthless and greedy men in every generation." Stephen Wright, *Tales Jesus Told*.

θεριζω reap, harvest όπου adv. where σπειρω sow συναγω gather όθεν where, from where διασκορπιζω scatter

Probably a parallel phrase.

### Verse 25

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καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἀπελθὼν ἔκρυψα τὸ τάλαντόν σου ἐν τῆ γῆ· ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν.

φοβηθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s φοβεομαι fear, be afraid (of) κρυπτω see v.18 γη, γης f earth σος, ση, σον possessive adj. your, yours

"To do no harm is the praise of a stone, not of a man." Richard Baxter.

### Verse 26

άποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Πονηρὲ δοῦλε καὶ ὀκνηρέ, ἤδεις ὅτι θερίζω ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρα καὶ συνάγω ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισα;

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked ὀκνηρος, α, ον lazy ἥδεις Verb, pluperf act indic, 2 s οἰδα

"It may well be that he is not saying that he really is the kind of man he has been said to be, but saying that if the third servant really thought that he was like that he would have acted in a different manner." Morris.

### Verse 27

ἔδει σε οὖν βαλεῖν τὰ ἀργύριά μου τοῖς τραπεζίταις, καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐγὼ ἐκομισάμην ἂν τὸ ἐμὸν σὺν τόκῳ.

ἔδει Verb, imperf indic, 3 s (impers) δει it is necessary, should, ought βαλεῖν Verb, aor act infin βαλλω throw, throw down, place άργυριον, ου n see v.18 τραπεζιτης, ου m banker

The word comes from the Greek for 'table' and is derived from the practice of bankers working while seated behind a table.

ἐκομισάμην Verb, aor midd indic, 1 s κομιζω midd receive, be paid back ἀν particle indicating contingency ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

τοκος, ου m interest (on money)

This would have demanded little initiative or effort on the servant's part.

### Verse 28

ἄρατε οὖν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ τάλαντον καὶ δότε τῷ ἔχοντι τὰ δέκα τάλαντα·

ἄρατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl  $\,$  αἰρω take, take away

δότε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl  $\,$  διδωμι  $\,$  δεκα  $\,$  ten

The point is that it should now be given to someone who will make good use of it.

## Verse 29

τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ δοθήσεται καὶ περισσευθήσεται· τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

δοθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s διδωμι περισσευθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s περισσευω increase, abound, have plenty

ἔχοντος Verb, pres act ptc, m gen s ἐχω ἀρθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s αἰρω

Cf. 13:12. "Jesus is not countenancing business practices that enable the wealthy to become wealthier at the expense of the deserving poor. He is laying down a principle for the spiritual life, a principle of great importance. Anyone who has a talent (using the word in the modern sense) of any kind and fails to use it, by that very fact forfeits it. By contrast, anyone who has a talent and uses it to the full finds that that talent develops and grows." Morris. Hagner comments, "Faithfulness provides more blessing; unfaithfulness results in loss even of one's initial blessings."

On the other hand, Stephen Wright lays great stress on reading the details of the story in the context of the story. He writes, "Retainers of the rich who play the rich men's game may not, indeed, possess riches as a result, but they will enhance their status and security. Those who do not play along will find that they lose what status and security they had."

### Verse 30

καὶ τὸν ἀχρεῖον δοῦλον ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.

άχρειος, ov worthless ἐκβάλετε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl ἐκβαλλω throw out, cast out σκοτος, ους n darkness, evil ἐξωτερος, α, ον outer, outmost

Cf. 8:12; 22:13.

ἐκει there, in that place

For the remaining phrase, see 24:51. The phrase "stands for complete and final rejecton and of unceasing sorrow and regret." Morris.