

The Tribulation Parables

By Jim Sayles

Headlines:

- *Where are we in the end times progression from birth pains to great tribulation?
- *What generation of believers will see all these things come to pass?
- *What will cause numerous ministry leaders appointed and anointed to feed the sheep to become apostate during tribulation?
- *Will the status quo of the deceived and divided church of today ever change?
- *What circumstances and responses will cause many end times believers to reject their faith in Jesus Christ?
- *Is the future of the church all gloom and doom, or will the overcomers finally experience the unity and glory of Christ in the world?

The primary source of prophetic information for the church concerning the events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ is the Lord's response to the disciples' question, "***When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?***" Matthew 24:3

This was initiated by the Lord when, in the presence of all of His disciples, He made an unexpected response to their admiration of the physical beauty of the temple by prophesying that the temple would be destroyed with not one stone left on top of another, a prophecy that was fulfilled in 70AD as the Romans, under Titus, sacked the city and destroyed the temple with not one stone left on top of another.

This prophecy concerning the temple then prompted Peter, Andrew, James, and John, alone with Him on the very mountain where He would return, to ask their question about the signs of His return and the end of the age.

What He gave them was a straightforward outline of the entire future of the church followed by the metaphors of Noah and the ark, one taken and one left, and four illustrative prophetic parables.

These parables, the fig tree sign, the faithful and wicked servants, the ten virgins, and the parable of the talents are typically treated as kingdom parables rather than prophetic parables, but the Lord specifically used them to provide important prophetic details to those end times disciples who would have "ears to hear" and "eyes to see."

In view of the birth metaphor used by the Lord in the Olivet prophecy, His death, burial, and resurrection equates to conception, and “not yet the end” equates to the church’s experience up to that period late in the third trimester identified as “the beginning of birth pains.”

Prophetically we are in the latter part of “the beginning of birth pains,” but at some point in the very near future the birthing pains, increasing both in intensity and in the compression of time, will become “tribulation,” followed by “great tribulation,” followed by the birth event itself, the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Matthew 24 Compared With Revelation

Matt. 24:4-6	Matt. 24:7,8	Matt. 24:9-14	Matt. 24:15-31
The church age up to the 1 st Seal	Revelation 6:1-8 1 st Seal > 4 th Seal	Revelation 6:9-17 5 th Seal > 6 th Seal	Rev 8:1 7 th Seal
<i>“not yet the end”</i>	<i>“beginning of birth pains”</i>	<i>“tribulation”</i>	<i>“great tribulation”</i>
False Christs, wars and rumors of war	kingdom against kingdom, financial collapse, natural disasters, famine, and disease kill 1.5 billion people	World government is established; false prophets, persecution of Christians escalates	Antichrist declares himself to be “God”; the end time harvest; the last day resurrection; and the day of the Lord

Strangely, the Lord left out the secret (not disclosed in scripture) “rapture” of the church prior to tribulation. What He told His disciples instead, illustrated in great detail in the typology of Noah and the ark, the one taken and one left, and in all four prophetic parables, was that the time frame identified as “tribulation” would initiate a time of testing for the church with the shocking disclosure that many in the believing, born-again, regenerated church would reject their faith in the Lord during this time of testing.

“And then...(during tribulation)...many...(of My people)... will be offended and repelled ... (because they are unprepared for tribulation)... and begin to distrust and desert [Him whom they ought to trust and obey] and will stumble and fall away,... (become apostate)... and betray one another and

pursue one another with...(demonically inspired)... ***hatred.***” Matthew 24:10
Amplified (inserts are the author’s)

This is the apostasy Paul said would take place before the day of the Lord.
(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

It is no wonder, then, that Satan was able to introduce the deception of a secret “rapture” of church only saints prior to tribulation, because that “escape” appeals to our flesh. Or that he introduced this false hope of “escape” for the purpose of preventing our preparation for this time of testing, which will, in turn, lead to the despair and the shocking rejection of their faith in Jesus Christ by many.

If the reader is angered by this challenge to the popular pre-tribulation “rapture” theory or by the thought that God would severely test the faith of the elect we only need to remember and reflect on James 1:2-4:

Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations.

Be assured and understand that the trial and proving ... (testing)... of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience.

But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing. Amplified (insert and emphasis is the author’s)

Therefore, our entire walk of faith includes this testing, but the testing to come will be more extreme than even the testing of the early church. And it is apparent that the Western church, at least, is not prepared for “tribulation,” (Greek: “trouble”).

In scripture if something is spoken twice we know that it is really, really important or very, very true. But this theme of apostasy (rejecting our faith) is carried over into the Noah metaphor, the one taken and one left illustration, and three of the four illustrative parables. It therefore appears a total of six times in Matthew 24 and 25, and the only other narrative recorded in scripture that gives this much emphasis to a single concept is the same threat of apostasy for those that do not overcome the testing of their faith given to six of the seven types of the church in the message to the seven churches. (Revelation 2 and 3)

This tells me that the Father made certain that the generation who will experience tribulation receives this crucial warning so that we will prepare spiritually for the trials and testing of our faith immediately ahead of us.

At the same time we need to remember that the Lord's primary warning to us is to not be misled or deceived, and the obvious, observable fact is that the divided, somnolent church, placing our hope in a false pre-tribulation "rapture," IS deceived and is in desperate need of deliverance from deception before the testing of our faith begins in earnest.

As we will all ultimately realize, those fathers of the faith who are currently teaching the false dispensational doctrine of a pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" of church only saints, are addressed specifically in the parable of the faithful and wicked servants.

The parable of the faithful and wicked servants reveals that the wicked servant (and one is not a "servant" unless one actually belongs to the Master) begins to beat his fellow servants and to drink with the drunkards, the metaphors of which are unlikely to be recognized by "wicked servants" in the church today.

The word "beat" or "smite" in the original Greek is used metaphorically to mean to "wound" or to "disquiet one's conscience," and this is accomplished by the wicked servants (i.e. ministry leaders or "shepherds") wounding the flock and misleading them with idolatrous, non-revelatory false doctrines and practices that divide and inflict spiritual impoverishment on the sheep.

The end of the wicked servants, if they do not repent, is that they suffer the same fate as the hypocrites where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is the future of these unrepentant "wicked" servants, who are not giving the sheep the food and supplies that the Lord has appointed and anointed them to administer, the "hidden manna" and "unleavened bread" of the absolute, immutable, revelatory truth of God, and are, instead, misleading and deceiving the flock.

This is similar to the event in which the rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked what he needed to do in order to enter the kingdom. When he answered the Lord saying, "All these (religious) things I have done," the Lord told him that the only thing left for him to do (the only thing necessary for him to do) was to sell all his earthly possessions...(his attachment to worldly attainment and security)..., give them to the poor, and follow Him in total abandonment to a life of genuine faith and obedience.

For the wicked servants of our day this is the equivalent of giving up ministries, denominations, false doctrines, false practices, and personal reputations in order to follow the Lord in spirit and truth.

But many will not respond to this end time demand for repentance, as expressed succinctly in Revelation 2 and 3, and, according to the Lord, they will experience the fate of all hypocrites.

The parable of the ten virgins reveals the prophetic truth that the early church was wide awake with their lamps burning brightly and full of oil (the Holy Spirit). But when the Lord tarried all ten virgins became drowsy and fell asleep.

This divided and deceived, somnolent church has persisted up into the current stage of “the beginning of birth pains” even as we, the fig tree generation, begin to become aware that the next stage, “tribulation,” is nearly upon us.

In the parable of the ten virgins, all ten, the entire corporate, believing church, wake up at the groomsmen’s announcement, “***Behold! The bridegroom is coming.***”

This will be both an event in the world that gets our attention as it lines up with prophetic scripture and an event in which the Spirit of Truth causes us to know with absolute certainty that we are the fig tree generation who will experience the final events leading up to the birth of the Kingdom Age and the return of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Yet, in the aftermath of this awakening of the church, the “foolish” virgins, representing half of the corporate body of Christ, wounded spiritually by the “wicked servants,” are unable to respond appropriately to the Lord’s demands of repentance from the idolatries of denominationalism, false doctrine, false practice, and the Phariseeical religiosity of the wicked servants. And these “foolish” believers eventually run out of oil (become apostate) resulting in their judgment at the second resurrection when the Lord says, “***I do not know you.***” (Though He did know them at one time.)

Even worse, many of these are those of the harlot church, drunk on the blood of the martyrs, who will persecute faithful believers during tribulation. (i.e. the “foolish” will ultimately persecute the “wise”).

In the parable of the talents a biblical talent is a measure of weight, typically of precious metals, with the Roman talent at that time being the equivalent of 71 pounds. Talents are a money metaphor used to illustrate the gifts of the Spirit given to the Master’s servants.

In this parable the Master, Jesus Christ, is going on a long journey (almost 2000 years), and He gives His servants (all Christian believers) charge of varying amounts of money or gold to invest for Him while He is gone.

Two are faithful, investing what He has given them so that the Master receives a return on His investment. The third, receiving the smallest amount, a single talent, buried the talent instead of investing it for His Master.

What this represents is the believer, given the Holy Spirit and given specific spiritual gifts, attends church and lives up to the religious expectations of men but fails to exercise the gifts of the Spirit by grace through faith in genuine ministry.

His excuse when the Master returns is an accusation. He accuses the Master of reaping what he did not sow and gathering (the harvest) where he had not winnowed the grain. Therefore, the unfaithful servant feels justified in not sowing or gathering, as long as he is content just to be a “Christian,” saved and going to heaven (the buried talent), but never allowing the seed planted in his spirit to grow and produce the “fruit” of a life of faith in service to the Master.

He did not even invest his faith in others (i.e. giving to ministries involved in sowing and gathering on behalf of the Master).

In the end, others who have been faithful are given this “good-for-nothing” servant’s seed to sow, and they reap the reward that was meant for him. Then he not only loses the reward meant for him, but he loses his salvation as well.

In all these parables we see a common theme with variations on emphasis. When tribulation comes both the faith of the shepherds and the sheep will be tested. The “wise” will wake up and manifest the faith the Lord has apportioned to them. The “foolish” will make a partial response, but will ultimately, through deception, and resentment against God because of tribulation, reject their faith in Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 24:37-39 the Lord tells us that these final days of the age will be like the days of Noah. Noah believed God and spent many years building the ark while everyone around him continued to live as if the flood would not come.

This bears an eerie resemblance to the majority of the church today, either believing that “tribulation” (the flood) will not come in their day or that they will be “raptured” away and escape the testing of their faith so adequately described by the Lord in Matthew 24 and 25.

When Noah entered the ark, a type of God’s supernatural protection, the flood came and swept all of the apostate unbelievers away. Thus Noah was not removed from the flood but was protected **IN** the flood (a type of the tribulation), while those who rejected the truth of God were swept away (into apostasy).

In our case, this sadly includes many in the body of Christ today, who, because of deception or worldliness, are not prepared for the days immediately ahead of us.

But we are warned.

“See, I have warned you beforehand.” Matthew 24:25 Amplified

In the lesson or parable of the fig tree and all the trees putting on leaves we learn that the generation of believers who see and experience the events described in the Olivet prophecy leading up to “tribulation” and “great tribulation” are the same generation who will experience “tribulation” and “great tribulation.”

Therefore, the fig tree parable describes who, or which generation of Christian believers, will experience “tribulation” and “great tribulation.”

“So also when you see these signs all taken together coming to pass, you may know of surety that He is near, at the very doors.” Matthew 24:33
Amplified

Therefore, the very next recognizable event on the horizon for the church is NOT the “rapture” of the church, but the “wake up” event in which we, the entire corporate body of Christ, will ALL hear the groomsman’s voice saying, ***Behold! The bridegroom is coming.***