附:耶穌橄欖山講論分析

	24:1	耶穌出了聖殿、正走的時候、門徒進前來、把殿宇指給他看。		
有關主後70 年的預言	24:2	耶穌對他們說、你們不是看見這殿宇麼・我實在告訴你們、將來在這裏、 沒有一塊石頭留在石頭上不被拆毀了。		
門徒有關末世 的問題	24:3	耶穌在橄欖山上坐着、門徒暗暗的來說、請告訴我們、甚麼時候有這些 事・你降臨和世界的末了、有甚麼預兆呢。		
	24:4	耶穌回答說、你們要謹慎、免得有人迷惑你們。		啟2-3
教會時代的景	24:5	因為將來有好些人冒我的名來、說、我是基督、並且要迷惑許多	彼後2:1-2	
象,越近終結 越多和越明顯	24:6	你們也要聽見打仗和打仗的風聲、總不要驚慌‧因為這些事是必 只是末期還沒有到。	提後3:1-7	
	24:7	民要攻打民、國要攻打國・多處必有饑荒、地震。		
教會被提	24:8	這都是災難的起頭。(災難原文作生産之難)		
世界開始7年大 災難	24:9	那時 人要把你們陷在思難裏、也要殺害你們・你們又要為我的 民恨惡。	<b>内名、被萬</b> 大淫婦帶	啟6:1-17,8 :7-9:21(七印
	24:10	那時 必有許多人跌倒、也要彼此陷害、彼此恨惡。	來宗教大	災與七號災) 6417-19
前3年半大	24:11	且有好些假先知起來、迷惑多人。	合一	啟17,18
災難	24:12	只因不法的事增多、許多人的愛心、纔漸漸冷淡了。		啟7:4-8 14萬4千 名猶太人宣教士
	24:13	惟有忍耐到底的、必然得救。	重建,獻祭重	啟11:3-12 兩位
	24:14	這天國的福音、要傳遍天下、對萬民作見證、然後末期纔來到《	新開始	見證人傳福音 <u>啟14:6-7 天使在</u>
7年大災難中間	24:15	你們看見先知但以理所說的、那行毀壞可憎的、站在聖地 · (简 須要會意)	<b>賣這經的人</b> 啟13:14	半空傳福音
the basic I	24:16	那時 在猶太的、應當逃到山上・		但9:27, 11
後3年半大 災難	24:17	在房上的、不要下來拿家裏的東西・		:31,啟13,14 ,15七碗災,敵
<b>火</b>	24:18	在田裏的、也不要回去取衣裳。		基督與假先知操
	24:19	當那些日子、懷孕的和奶孩子的有禍了。		控世界
	24:20	<sup>24:20</sup> 你們應當祈求、叫你們逃走的時候、不遇見冬天、或是安息日·		
來也 <mark>24:22 若不</mark>		因為那時,必有大災難、從世界的起頭、直到如今、沒有這樣的來也必沒有。	<b>勺災難、後</b>	啟12:13-16
		若不滅少那日子、凡有血氣的、總沒有一個得救的·只是為選民、那日子 必滅少了。		
	24:23 那時 若有人對你們說、基督在這裏·或說、基督在那裏·你們不要信			
	24:24	因為假基督、假先知、將要起來、顯大神蹟、大奇事・倘若能? 也就迷惑了。	宁、連選民	
7年大災難	24:25	看哪、我预先告訴你們了。		
末期	24:26	若有人對你們說、看哪、基督在曠野裏,你們不要出去,或說、 督在內屋中,你們不要信。	、看哪、基	
主耶穌與眾	24:27	閃電從東邊發出、直照到西邊・人子降臨、也要這樣。		啟19:11-21
聖徒降臨 地上(橄欖 山)	24:28	屍首在那裏、鷹也必聚在那裏。		
	24:29	那些日子的災難一過去、日頭就變黑了、月亮也不放光、眾星勢 落 <u>、</u> 天勢都要震動。	<b>要從天上墜</b>	
	24:30	那時 人子的兆頭要顯在天上、地上的萬族都要哀哭・他們要表有能力、有大榮耀、駕着天上的雲降臨。	5見人子、	啟1:7 撒迦利亞書 12:10-11
	24:31	他要差遣使者、用號筒的大聲、將他的選民、從四方、從天這經 邊、都招聚了來。 (方原文作風)	<b>会、到</b> 天那	

主審判地上 萬民,得救 的被留下, 得進入千禧 年國度 <sup>25:30</sup> 當人子在他榮耀裏、同着眾天使降臨的時候、要坐在他榮耀的寶座上・

25:32 萬民都要聚集在他面前·他要把他們分別出來、好像牧羊的分別綿羊山羊 一般·

25:33 把綿羊安置在右邊、山羊在左邊。

- 25:34 於是王要向那右邊的說、你們這蒙我父賜福的、可來承受那創世以來為你們所預備的國。
- <sup>25:35</sup> 因為我餓了、你們給我喫・渴了、你們給我喝・我作客旅、你們留我住・
- 25:36 我赤身露體、你們給我穿・我病了、你們看顧我・我在監裏、你們來看 我。
- 25:37<sup>2</sup>義人就回答說、主阿、我們甚麼時候見你餓了給你喫、渴了給你喝。

我人就四合说,王門,我们在麼时便兒你瞅了結你笑,為了結你喝。

- 25:38 甚麼時候見你作客旅留你住、或是赤身露體給你穿。
  25:39 又甚麼時候見你病了、或是在監裏、來看你呢。
- 25:40 王要回答說、我實在告訴你們、這些事你們既作在我這弟兄中一個最小的 身上、就是作在我身上了。
- 25:41<sup>71</sup>王又要向那左邊的說、你們這被咒詛的人、離開我、進入那為魔鬼和他的 使者所預備的永火裏去。
- 25:42 因為我餓了、你們不給我喫・渴了、你們不給我喝。
- 25:43 我作客旅、你們不留我住・我赤身露體、你們不給我穿・我病了、我在監裏、你們不來看顧我。
- 25:44 他們也要回答說、主阿、我們甚麼時候見你餓了、或渴了、或作客旅、或 赤身露體、或病了、或在監裏、不伺候你呢。
- 25:45 王要回答說、我實在告訴你們、這些事你們既不作在我這弟兄中一個最小的身上、就是不作在我身上了。
- 25:46 這些人要往永刑裏去·那些義人要往永生裏去。

啟20:1-3 魔鬼被綑綁 1千年

啟20:4-6地上進入千禧年

太13

啟19:20-

21敵基督

與假先知

被扔到火

湖

# 耶穌有關祂再來的五個比喻/勸勉 (太24:32-25:1-30)

的比喻 24:33 洁埃、你們丟目這一切的事、也該知道太子近了、正在門口了。			
海水 医肌吸光管 系统主,原政场后又1671,正在1101。	這樣、你們看見這一切的事、也該知道人子近了、正在門口了。		
<sup>24:34</sup> 我實在告訴你們、這世代還沒有過去、這些事都要成就。			
<sup>24:35</sup> 天地要廢去、我的話卻不能廢去。			
<sup>24:36</sup> 但那日子、那時辰、沒有人知道、連天上的使者也不知道、子也不知道、 惟獨父知道。			
<sup>24:37</sup> 挪亞的日子怎樣、人子降臨也要怎樣。	7		
。 Intervite 2018 常进业队前的日本。 I 腔管脚眼膜取、岩刻煅药进于内的形口。	E前3:20 E後2:5		
的提醒 <b>24:39</b> 不知不覺洪水來了、把他們全都沖去,人子降臨也要這樣。	W-1/-		
24:40 那時、兩個人在田裏、取去一個、撒下一個。	45 . 24 25		
<sup>24:41</sup> 兩個女人推磨・取去一個、撤下一個。 <sup>路1</sup>	17:34-37		
<sup>24:42</sup> 所以你們要做醒、因為不知道你們的主是那一天來到。			
<sup>24:43</sup> 家主若知道幾更天有賊來、就必儆醒、不容人挖透房屋・這是你們所知道 的。			
<sup>24:44</sup> 所以你們也要預備·因為你們想不到的時候、人子就來了。			
<sup>24:45</sup> 誰是忠心有見識的僕人、為主人所派、管理家裏的人、按時分糧給他們 呢。			
3。善惡僕人 <b>24:46</b> 主人來到、看見他這樣行、那僕人就有福了。			
的比喻 24:47 我實在告訴你們、主人要派他管理一切所有的。	我實在告訴你們、主人要派他管理一切所有的。		
<sup>24:48</sup> 倘若那惡僕心裏說、我的主人必來得遲、			
<sup>24:49</sup> 就動手打他的同伴、又和酒醉的人一同喫喝·			
$^{24:50}$ 在想不到的日子、不知道的時辰、那僕人的主人要來、			
24:51 重重的處治他、(或作把他腰斬了)定他和假冒為善的人同罪・在那裏必要哀哭切齒了。			

		30°47、
4。10個童女 的比喻	25:2	其中有五個是愚拙的・五個是聰明的。
	25:3	愚拙的拿着燈、卻不預備油・
	25:4	聰明的拿着燈、又預備油在器皿裏。
	25:5	新郎遲延的時候、他們都打盹睡着了。
	25:6	半夜有人喊着說、新郎來了、你們出來迎接他。
	25:7	那些童女就都起來收拾燈。
	25:8	愚拙的對聰明的說、請分點油給我們・因為我們的燈要滅了。
	25:9	聰明的回答說、恐怕不夠你我用的・不如你們自己到賣油的那裏去買羅。
	25:10	他們去買的時候、新郎到了・那預備好了的、同他進去坐席・門就關了。
	25:11	其餘的童女、隨後也來了、說、主阿、主阿、給我們開門。
	25:12	他卻回答說、我實在告訴你們、我不認識你們。
	25:13	所以你們要做醒、因為那日子、那時辰、你們不知道。
	25:14	天國又好比一個人要往外國去、就叫了僕人來、把他的家業交給他們・
	25:15	按着各人的才幹、給他們銀子・一個給了五千、一個給了二千、一個給了 一千・就往外國去了。
5。按才幹	25:16	那领五千的、随即拿去做買賣、另外赚了五千。
授銀子(責任)的比喻	25:17	那领二千的、也照樣另賺了二千。
1工 / ロソレロ・明月	25:18	但那领一千的、去掘開地、把主人的銀子埋藏了。
	25:19	過了許久、那些僕人的主人來了、和他們算賬。
	25:20	那领五千銀子的、又帶着那另外的五千來、說、主阿、你交給我五千銀 子、請看、我又赚了五千。
	25:21	主人說、好、你這又良善又忠心的僕人,你在不多的事上有忠心、我要把 許多事派你管理,可以進來享受你主人的快樂。
	25:22	那领二千的也來說、主阿、你交給我二千銀子、請看、我又赚了二千。
	25:23	主人說、好、你這又良善又忠心的僕人,你在不多的事上有忠心、我要把 許多事派你管理,可以進來享受你主人的快樂。
	25:24	那领一千的、也來說、主阿、我知道你是忍心的人、沒有種的地方要收 割、沒有散的地方要聚斂。
	25:25	我就害怕、去把你的一千銀子埋藏在地裏・請看、你的原銀子在這裏。
	25:26	主人回答說、你這又惡又懶的僕人、你既知道我沒有種的地方要收割、沒 有散的地方要聚斂。
	25:27	就當把我的銀子放給兌換銀錢的人、到我來的時候、可以連本帶利收回。
	25:28	奪過他這一千來、給那有一萬的。
	25:29	因為凡有的、還要加給他、叫他有餘·沒有的、連他所有的、也要奪過 來。
	25:30	把這無用的僕人、丟在外面黑暗裏・在那裏必要哀哭切齒了。

25:1 那時、天國好比十個童女、拿着燈、出去迎接新郎。

昨晚我們研讀耶穌在橄欖山上有關祂再來與末世的預言(馬太第24和25章,統稱為「橄欖山講論」(Olivet Discourse)),內容牽涉到幾個教會常提到的比喻。以下是一些要點與分析,希望能夠幫助你更清楚明白這兩章的意思。

- 1。 馬太福音的對象是猶太人,聽耶穌講解的門徒也全是猶太人,當時教會尚未出現,這兩章經文都與教會無直接關係,因此,當中耶穌完全沒有提到教會被提,祂在24:32-25:30內提到的五個比喻都不應該用在教會身上,否則無法正確地解釋裡面的意思,甚至會令信徒錯誤地以為不長進的信徒有可能失去救恩。
- 2。 這兩章經文是耶穌回答門徒在24:3所提出的問題,是有關聖殿被毀(「這些事」) ,和耶穌「降臨與世界的末了」,因此,我們必須以末世預言來解釋,亦必須與其他末世 預言(尤其是啟示錄)對照。
- 3。為了更容易明白這兩章中時間表的推進,可以將24:31與25:31連接起來,讓事件和時間的推進一氣呵成,由教會時代終結教會被提,到七年大災難,到大災難完結後耶穌回來進行萬民審判,都包含時間上的推進,故要留意「那時」字眼多次出現。
- 4。主耶穌再來,接著便要對萬民施行審判,目的是將信徒(綿羊)與不信者(山羊)分開,然後才進入千禧年國度。但以理書12:11-12提到1,290日與1,335日,這兩個數字都超過1,260日(3年半)30天和45天,似乎是7年大災難後有少許日子才進入千禧年國度,而這個「審判萬民」可能就在這段時間進行。
- 5。耶穌在描述地上萬民的審判(25:31)之前,他先一連講了五個比喻,目的是要提醒/警告大災難中的不信者必須趕緊信主,否則耶穌突然回來進行審判時,他們將被定罪,面對悲慘的結局。明白了耶穌講這些比喻的目的,我們便會明白那些被洪水沖去的人/惡僕/愚拙的童女/領一千兩銀子的僕人,全是在大災難中依然不信的人,而非教會中不長進的基督徒。因此這些不信者的結局是:被洪水沖走/和假冒為善的人同罪/主不認識他們/丟在黑暗裡哀哭切齒。
- 6。要正確解釋24:40-41中兩個人其中一個被取去,一個撇下,首先我們要記得不要牽涉到教會,亦即耶穌並非在此講到教會被提。既然其他的比喻都是指經過大災難中的信徒和非信徒(綿羊公羊/善僕惡僕/聰明與愚拙童女)被分開,這個審判的目的亦是分別誰能進入千禧年國度。正確的解釋是:留下來的是信徒,他們得以進入千禧年國度,被取走的是不信者 (與教會被提相反,與挪亞洪水同樣)。

耶穌基督在上十字架的前兩天,在聖殿對面的橄欖山坐著,為門徒解答有關他再來和世界末了的問題,便是馬太福音第24和25章,亦稱為「橄欖山講論」(Olivet Discourse)。裡面主耶穌講到大災難中的情景,與及大災難完結時主耶穌回來在地上施行審判,都非常清楚易明,大部份解經家都無異意,可是,到了第24章32節至第25章30節中,主耶穌一連講了五個比喻,而在第二個比喻提到挪亞洪水的歷史時,主耶穌用了兩個「取去一個,撇下一個」的比喻,大家的看法便有分歧,主要的爭論是到底這些比喻是指向猶太人抑或指向教會。這兩個不同的看法,帶來兩個完全不同的解釋,尤其在比喻中的僕人/童女是否都是信徒,和誰是被取去和被撇下,都有不同的看法。我與吳兆良牧師(David Ng)都曾細心研讀這些「橄欖山講論」,但我們兩人對這些比喻的看法不同,就是代表了上述的兩個看法,以下是我們論點的比較:

	林修榮的看法	吳牧師的看法
「橄欖山講論」的對象	整個橄欖山講論內容都帶著濃厚的猶太色彩,大災難本身主要是為了拯救猶太人,故整個講論的主要對象都是猶太人,特別是將來在大災難中的猶太人,目的是要他們把握最後機會信主得救,以免在耶穌回來審判時落在永刑(25:46)	雖然耶穌是對著猶太人門徒講話,但聖經作者寫書時的對象至為重要,馬太在主後50年左右寫馬太福音,當時教會已經被設立,亦受到大逼迫,故作者的對象是教會信徒,比喻裡每一個僕人或童女都是指基督徒。
惡僕與燈裡沒有油的童女 是代表誰?	從惡僕和沒有預備油的童 女在主人來回時的悲慘下 場,他們應該是沒有得救 的非信徒(或假信徒); 主耶穌提到挪亞時代,當 時亦是分開信者與不信者 。耶穌以綿羊山羊被分開 作結束,可見比喻並非只 包括信徒在內。	由於作者馬太寫書的對象 是教會,故比喻中提到的 僕人和童女,雖然他們的 表現不同,但他們本身都 已經是信徒。況且他們都 在一起服侍主人或在等候 新郎,非信徒是不會作僕 人或童女的。
是否神以工作表現定他們是信徒抑或非信徒?	惡僕與沒有預備油的童女 為非信徒,並非因他們的 工作表現不佳,而是他們 的工作和行為表現證明了 他們對主人沒有信心,也 不理會主人是否會回來, 他們與主人沒有關係,難 怪新郎對他們說:我不認 識你們。	假如表現不佳或沒有油的 童女是非信徒,豈不是信 徒抑或是非信徒乃在乎他 們的行為或工作表現,這 豈不是違背了因信稱義的 真理?

他們都在同一地點,和做 同一的工作,故他們都是 基督徒? 在一起和做同樣的服侍不 一定代表他們都是基督徒 ,耶穌在馬太第13章講過 麥子和稗子的比喻,兩是生在一 起,但兩者的結局截然不同。 同。耶穌在馬太7:21-22也講過一些做主工作的 不同。耶穌在馬太7:21-22也講過一些做主工作的 不認識你們、你們這些不 惡說你們、你們這些作 惡的人、離開我去罷。可 見在一起和做同樣工作並 不等於他們都得救。 僕人們和童女們都在一起 ,他們的職份也是相同, 因此,他們都應該同是已 經得救的信徒,只是主人 回來時看到他們的預備與 忠心程度不一,故給他們 不同的賞罰。被罰的雖然 嚴厲,但沒有提到火的結 局,所以非指地獄,而是 指不能與主人親近的懲罰

## 誰被取去和誰被撇下?

除非我們否認教會是在大 災難前被提,從時間上耶 穌在這裡是描述大災難末 期的情況,故24:40-42不 應該是教會被提,而是 在大災難末期耶穌回來 判地上的人,決定誰可的 進入千禧年國度(撇下的 人),就像之前24:37-39 提到挪亞當時的情況,留 下的是得救的,與教會被 提的情況是相反。 由於作者的目標讀者是教會,這裡應該是講到教會被提。雖然耶穌在講論完這些比喻之後講到分別山羊綿羊的審判,這些比喻與這個審判不一定是連接的,即兩者不必相提並論

### Dear Pastor David:

Thank you for your very thoughtful response. I have read everything you sent me carefully. I appreciate the chance to discuss these issues with someone who has studied them in depth. It makes the discussion useful and in line with the Berean example in Act 17:11.

The key difference between our positions is whether all the servants/virgins/stewards are Christians. If one takes the view that the Olivet Discourse is intended for, and applied to, the church, then one would naturally conclude that they are all Christians. Additionally one must interpret the ending of the wicked servant/unprepared virgins/third steward to be something other than eternal damnation. However, if one takes the view that the Olivet Discourse aims at Jews -- not just church-age Jews but, more importantly, Tribulation-age Jews, then it is possible to accept that the wicked servant/unprepared virgins/third steward are non-Christians who face the eternal judgment of separation from God.

## First, the huge problems you identified

Allow me to first address the reasoning in your papers. You have identified the "huge problems" with making the third servant a non-believer.

The first problem you cited is "using the end to justify the means" – if we don't think Christians would go to a place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" then the third servant must be a non-Christian. While I do agree that the conclusion alone should not always validate the premise; there are nevertheless legitimate cause-effect relationships. Matthew 12:33 is a prime example: 你們或以為樹好、果子也好・樹壞、果子也壞・因為看果子、就可以知道樹。Here by looking at the fruit (the "end") one can draw conclusion about the tree (the "means"), because a good tree would invariably give out good fruit. Cause-effect relationship cannot be automatically ignored. The terrible fate awaiting the third servant shows this servant is rejected by Christ. And Jesus made it clear why he is to be rejected: his lack of action is a reflection of the wickedness in his heart (25:26). Such wickedness gave him a warped view of the master. His action shows he does not believe, or even care about, the master's returning. He has no real relationship with the master despite his position as a steward.

Then you discuss the context of the passage, which you think is the disciples. You also explained that the key here is what the stewards do while waiting for the master's return, and non-believers can't be vigilant and can't do anything for the Lord. While I agree that this parable admonishes Christians to use the talents given by the master to the fullest extent, the fact that the third servant is expected to apply his talent does not automatically make him a believer. The prerequisite for applying the master's talent fully is, first and foremost, believing in the master's goodness and his eventual return. There is a loving relationship between the faithful/good servant and the master which the third servant lacks. That is the reason the third

servant was afraid – he ought to be afraid, because as a non-believer he will face eternal damnation.

Your third point is they are all servants and are all given talents. Then you asked: does God give non-believers talents? I would submit that God does give the same basic talents (resources) to everyone in terms of a life time, basic intellect to understand the gospel message, and the opportunity to enter into relationship with the master and become a faithful servant. Sure non-Christians are not given any spiritual talents with which they serve the Lord with. The question here is whether we must interpret talents to mean only spiritual talents which are exclusively for Christians. And I question whether the talents given to the third servant is sufficient to conclude that he must be a Christian.

You also bring up the argument of similarity and proximity – they are all servants, and the virgins are all waiting for the bridegroom, ready or not, make them all believers. But the parable of the Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13) clearly shows being similar or close in proximity does not guarantee that they are all believers. Even the non-believers can do similar work as believers (Matthew 7:22-23).

### Second, the target audience of the Olivet Discourse

While you agree that the original audience when Jesus preached it was Jewish, you expanded the audience to include Jews in the 50's when there was widespread persecution. Because the church has already been established by that time, you also extended the target audience to the church. I do agree with the concept that biblical teachings should not be narrowly confined to only a contemporary audience, and that is why I think the letters to the 7 churches in Revelation 2-3 are intended for all churches in all ages.

However, there are biblical passages which are specifically intended for a certain audience. The Old Testament is a prime example. For sure that is addressed primarily to a Jewish audience, even though we gentile Christians do benefit from an understanding of God's redemptive plan which comes out of the Jews. But the Old Testament has to be understood in the Jewish context as they are the original intended audience.

The Olivet Discourse's Jewish emphasis is so overwhelmingly strong that it is not difficult to conclude that it is primarily intended for the Jews – mainly Jews in the future Tribulation. Even the final verses of the previous chapter (23:37-39) are about Israel's future restoration. And then 24:31 reiterates such sure Israeli restoration by mentioning the elect: 他要差遣使者、用號筒的大聲、將他的選民、從四方、從天這邊、到天那邊、都招聚了來。 Besides, the many Jewish references make the target audience abundantly clear: destruction of the Second Temple (24:1-2), Daniel's prophecies of the Great Tribulation (24:15); the flight into the Judean wilderness by the Jewish believers in the Tribulation (24:16); the mention of Sabbath (24:20), the mention of the elect (24:22), the mention of the Davidic Throne (25:31), etc. That is why I think Jesus was speaking to the Jews in the future Tribulation, urging them not to reject him anymore but to come to Himself for ultimate salvation. This would be their last

chance to be saved from eternal damnation. But the reality is that even in the Tribulation, when many Jews do realize that Jesus is the Messiah and become believers, many would still reject Him to the end (people who accepted the Beast's 666 mark). The message of separating the believers from believers is clear even outside of these parables -- 萬民都要聚集在他面前·他要把他們分別出來、好像牧羊的分別綿羊山羊一般·(25:32)

I do not disagree that the church would benefit from studying the Olivet Discourse, which is precisely why you and I are studying it diligently. But if we accept the real target audience is the Jews in the Tribulation, then we need not make the church the primary target audience.

## <u>Difficulties in Making the Church the Target Audience</u>

Putting the church as the primary target audience does pose a number of serious difficulties. When you apply the Olivet Discourse to the church, yet the church is raptured before the Tribulation, then most of the content would not matter to believers. Even Ignoring a pre-tribulation rapture, applying it to the church necessarily makes 24:40-41 the rapture of the church, not to mention that it would lead to a mid-trib or post-trib stance. Another troubling thought is the emphasis on work being the single most important task before the return of Christ. Is the whole purpose of the Olivet Discourse to encourage Christians to work hard, or is it about the critical decision to put one's faith in Christ or reject Him? I would argue it is the latter, because the last part of the Discourse is the Judgement of the Nations when the sheep (believers) and the goats (nonbelievers) are separated. Why end with this separation warning if the Discourse is for believers only? Finally, it becomes necessary to explain all the terrible ending of the wicked servant/unprepared virgins/third servant as not the loss of salvation, but a lack of rewards for these lazy Christians. But the words Jesus used to described these terrible results seem too horrible for even the lazy Christians: 洪水來了、把他們全都沖去 (24:39), 重重的處治他、〔或作把他腰斬了〕定他和假冒為善的人同罪・在那裏必要哀哭切 齒了。(24:51), 我實在告訴你們、我不認識你們。(25:12), 丟在外面黑暗裏、在那裏 必要哀哭切齒了。

Sau-Wing Lam

#### 以下是吳牧師對我提出的論點的回覆

Dear Sau Wing,

I benefit much from your careful exposition. I believe that we would end up agreeing to disagree. I believe it is OK.

There are many fine points of argument. Let me respond to two major points.

1. Target audience – I agree that Jesus meant the message for His disciples and their contemporary Jews. Based on this premise, then I would also come away with the same conclusions. However, I maintain that the Gospel authors' intention should take precedent over Jesus'. Hermeneutic principle demands that I take the author's (as written down in the text) meaning over the speaker's in the event (when Jesus spoke).

For example, take a look at the parallel passage in Luke 19:11-27. There the servants are clearly distinguished from the "至於我那些仇敵,就是不願意我作王統治他們的," both in their identities (servants vs. enemy) as well as final disposition (robbed of the opportunity to rule vs. being killed.) Also, in Luke's rendering, the Jews are alluded to as "他本國的人" and they are one and the same as those who are the King's enemy. (compare v.14 and v.27).

While the church is already raptured prior to the tribulation, Jews and Gentiles who remain will turn to Jesus in large numbers. So on this point, I agree with you some portion of the text is used to describe the suffering of converts during the tribulation. As such, it is still applicable to this age for we do not know who will believe before or after the rapture.

By the way, I do not take "talent" in Matthew 25 to mean "spiritual gifts." Rather, I believe it is the "abilities" of the servants that means "spiritual gifts and perhaps also natural talents."

2. Basis of judgment and judgment itself – One major difficulty for me to take the 'foolish virgins, third servant, etc. to mean non-believers is the basis of judgment. It appears that all these characters are judged on works as well as preparedness for the master's return. How does it jive with salvation by faith alone?

Regarding the judgment itself, if "outside darkness" is one and the same as "eternal fire" (25:41) and "eternal punishment" (25:46) why the different languages? Moreover, the setting and occasion in 25:31ff, describing Jesus' physical return, is clearly different than those in the preceding parables. I would contend that the parables refer to 基督的審判臺前 for believers (cf. 2 Cor.5:10) which precedes the judgment for non-believers (Matt. 25:31ff) chronologically.

I know that the term "外面的黑暗,哀哭切齒" makes most Christians very uncomfortable if that is the fate that awaits some of them. (Yet it is interesting to note that on at least two occasions when I polled the audience, they all think that all the servants are Christians. One time it was during a 培訓 given to 家庭教會 pastors in China, and the second time was at the workshop you invite me to give last year. By the way, I heard it first taught by Dr. Lin during Winter Conference in 1973.) I surveyed all references to this term in Matthew, not all meant "hell." If the term clearly indicates hell, they all have "fire" in the same context. So here in Matthew 24-25, it can mean a state of remorse of loss opportunities or something of high value. For the unfaithful Christians, it means that they regret as find out due to their inaction in this life, they miss out on "神在基督耶穌裡召我往上去得的獎賞" (cf. Phil.3:14).

Blessings, David