

Title: ENTERING THE KINGDOM, MT. 22:1-14 & 25:31-46
(Chatham, NJ; 11/20/11, AM) [D – Two-Point Outline with Questions]

Theme: Both Parables reveal how some enter the Kingdom of God and some don't as well as what joy is experienced by those who enter.

Purpose: To exhort us to do those things that ensure entry and to assure us that great joy awaits.

Introduction:

1. "Dead End Times" (Touchstone, Nov/Dec 2011, p. 21) suggests that we have the wrong apocalyptic scenarios and are morbidly gloomy for a lot of wrong reasons.
2. These are narratives that replace the only correct apocalyptic events, the ones we should be most concerned about.
3. The true eschatological narrative not only tells us how to prepare for the eventual outcome but also provides hope and an expectation of joy.

I. The Wedding Feast, Matthew 22:1-14

A. The story goes like this.

1. A king invites people to join the wedding of his son.
2. They received the invitation, but twice they refused to attend the feast.
3. Some made excuses: farm, business.
4. Others mistreated his servants, even killed some.
5. The king punished them (7); they were not worthy to attend (8).
6. The servants fill the house with any who will come (9-10).
7. One person tries to get in improperly and is thrown out (11-13).
8. "Many are called, but few are chosen."

B. Preparation for the Feast

1. Say yes to God's invitation.
2. Say no to those things that interfere.
3. The excuses are listed: a business, a farm, a field and oxen (in Luke), even relationships (a wife in Luke).
4. Essentially life gets in the way (or at least what we think is more important in life).
5. The Parable of the Sower warns about "the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of life," that choke the growing plants and rob them of life.
6. Say yes to God; say no to those things.

C. Why not a gloomy outlook

1. We have been invited to a feast, a celebration!
2. We'll sit with the dignitaries of God: Jesus speaks of the patriarchs and prophets eating while people will come from all over to join them "at table in the Kingdom of God," (Luke 13:28-29).
3. Everyone has been afforded the chance to attend. The invitation is not exclusive to a certain group.
4. The impending doom is for those who refuse, but for the rest there is hope.

II. The Final Judgment, Matthew 25:31-46 (2 Peter 3:10 describes the apocalyptic vision)

A. The picture of the last judgment

1. Jesus is on the throne (31).
2. All the nations are before him and he separates the good from the bad (32-33).
3. The sheep have cared for their fellow man and are allowed to enter the Kingdom.
4. The goats have not and are denied entrance.
5. The righteous enter eternal life while the unrighteous enter eternal punishment.

B. Preparation for this Day

1. This is not the complete picture of all that is required since we know that certain behaviors also keep people from entering, Gal. 5:19-21.
2. Judgment hinges on two things: awareness of God's presence and kindness toward others (brothers and sisters?).
3. This goes even beyond doing good deeds for the poor; it focuses attention on God's presence among us.
4. We are, of course, called to be compassionate (1 John 3:16-18), to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to dedicate ourselves to doing good (Titus 3:8).
5. Yet it is the awareness of and belief in God that promotes such behavior; the goats never recognized God's presence and thus could not respond appropriately.

C. Why not a gloomy outlook

1. First, a gloomy outlook negates the presence and promises of God
2. Second, Paul prays (Eph. 1:18) that the church "know this hope, the riches of his inheritance." It is something we must grow to live for.
3. Third, eternal life awaits
4. If you had the chance to have hope, wouldn't you want it?

Conclusion:

1. The likelihood of a man-made apocalyptic event is very small, but a God-directed one is certain.
2. By God's grace I escape judgment and enter into the Kingdom of God.
3. He has explained clearly what he expects, and I have the freedom to choose it.
4. We must continue not only doing these things but encouraging others to do them as we see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).
5. I renounce the gloomy and nihilistic sentiment of the world, and embrace with joy the hope of eternal bliss in the next life.
6. This is the true narrative of eschatological events that drive and determine our fate.
7. Let us accept it and live it out always.