

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Text: Matthew 25:1-13

Key Word: Virgins

Key Thought: Be Ready for the Rapture/Rupture of the Church

There is no doubt that this a gem of a parable for God's people in the time of the end.

“No parable surpasses this one in beauty or in a pathos (pity) which becomes so tragic. Nor in any is there a greater contrast between the simple and familiar things which makes the story and the magnitude of the truths illustrated.”

Professor Salmond
“*The Parable of our Lord*” 1893

It is one of the parables that has created great controversy. Scholars argue about what time period we are dealing with; who the virgins are (whether they are Jew or Gentile; saved or unsaved). There has also been a great deal of debate over what the oil represents. The more you study this parable, the more you can see how many interpretations can be promoted.

I believe that Jesus shared the parables to confuse the wise while sharing deep truths with the simple and humble at heart.

*“The disciples came to him [Jesus] and asked,
‘Why do you speak to the people in parables?’
11. He replied, ‘The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.
12. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.
13. This is why I speak to them in parables:
‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.’”*

Matthew 13:10-13

We need to keep our hearts and minds open to the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who leads us into all truth. That truth will set us free.

“It is cruel to put the parable to the torture and compel it to give meanings which it never received from its Author.”

William Arnot
“*The Parable of our Lord*” 1872

One of the keys to understand this parable is found in the time that it will take place. It is clear from the context of chapter 24 that this parable was intended for the “*end of the age;*” the last generation; at the time our Lord will come.

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.”

Matthew 25:1

There is no doubt in my mind that this parable was given to describe the time just before the consummation of the age. The three parables recorded in Matthew 25 follow each other in a similar train of thought. They all include the thought that the absent Lord returns. It is with this return that each of the three consider a slightly different aspect of truth.

The first parable deals with a “**Communal**” responsibility; or the behavior of the “virgins” toward each other. The second parable deals with an “**Individual**” responsibility; or how we deal personally with what we have. The third parable deals with “**Imperial**” responsibility; or how the nations will be held responsible for their actions.

With these thoughts in mind we need to consider what the main thought is in this first parable. As I just said, lets keep in mind that this parable deals our Communal responsibility. We need to become concerned about the behavior of our fellow believers. Lets focus in on . . .

I. The Peril of Externalism (Matthew 25:3, 8,10a,12)

II. The Power of Internalism (Matthew 25:4,7,10b)

III. The Protection of Extremism (Matthew 25:10c)

I. The Peril of Externalism (Matthew 25:3, 8,10a,12)

One of the main problems of the end of the age is where the people of God begin to place the focus of their lives upon. There appears to be a major problem that the Lord addresses in this parable.

One thing that must be recognized at the beginning of this parable is that Jesus was talking about “*ten virgins.*” He didn’t say that the five wise ones were virgins and the five foolish ones were not. All ten of them were “*virgins*” or “*maidens.*”

I. The Peril of Externalism (Matthew 25:3, 8,10a,12)(Contd.)

This word is used to describe “young, chaste and unmarried women.” The biblical use goes on to describe them as any male or female who has kept themselves undefiled. It must be emphasized that the “foolish virgins” cannot represent a non-repentive sinner.

The number ten is also very important. Just as the number seven among the Jews is used to denote perfection and the number three represents God; **so the number ten is the number of completion.** **When you combine God with perfection you have completion.** In the ancient Jewish Law whenever there were ten Jews, a synagogue could be built.

Another important note is to see that each of the ten virgins had their OWN lamp. We are talking about a torch that was simply a long pole with oil-drenched rags on the top of it. These rags would burn for about 1/2-1 hour before more oil was required. If oil was not added, the rags would be consumed and the fire would go out leaving the person in the dark. Roman torches were a mixture of sulfur and lime to keep them lit even if they were plunged into water. **Each virgin was responsible for their own torch.**

This is the concern I have for our generation. **We have people who are more concerned about an instant, temporary fire.** They do all they can to be around others who are shining forth the light as they wait for the call of the bridegroom. They are so caught up in the “here and now” that they have forgotten to prepare for the future. The night is moving on. The time will arrive when both the wise and foolish virgins will become tired waiting for the return of the bridegroom.

“The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.”

Matthew 25:5

There is **no condemnation** given towards these sleeping virgins. But there is **commendation** given to the wise virgins who prepare for the darkness of the upcoming night. The Bible says that the bridegroom chose to come at midnight. It is considered as the middle of the night and sometimes considered as the darkest time of the night.

The typical Eastern wedding would have invitations sent out as much as a year in advance. At the hour just prior to the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom would leave his home and make his way to the home of the bride. He would go through the streets of the village where an announcement would be proclaimed saying, **“Behold the bridegroom! Come forth to meet him!”** At this point, those who were dressed in the virgin attire and had been invited to the marriage would quickly take their oil drenched lamps and join in the procession. Since there were no streetlights, it was important to bring a torch in order to dispel the darkness and keep one safe from the obstacles in their pathway. It also added to the honour of the wedding couple.

II. The Power of Internalism (Matthew 25:4,7,10b)

We can clearly see a number of similarities in this parable. Both the wise and the unwise were five in number (the number of God's grace). Secondly, they were all virgins. They also all had lamps or torches. Jesus also said that they ALL fell asleep as the darkness of night came upon them. They ALL arose at the summons to join the festive procession. This is where the difference is made clear.

What made the wise virgins wise and the others unwise? Is it not that they had carefully considered the needs they would have for the future and not just the present? Even though their torches had dimmed, **they had enough oil to last through the night.**

What is the oil representing? It cannot symbolize salvation - a **profession** of salvation without the **possession** of it. It is clear that all ten were virgins. **The oil can only represent the Holy Spirit.** Moses was instructed to make a clear oil for the Lampstand out of pressed olive oil (Exodus 27:20-21). He was also told to make an anointing oil of specific fine spices and olive oil. It was considered as holy or sacred unto God. Everything and everyone had to be anointed before they could enter the presence of God or be used in any part of the worship. Anyone who touched anything that had been anointed became holy. **There also was an important warning affixed to the oil.**

“ Do not pour it on men's bodies and do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred.

33. Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from his people.”

Exodus 30:32,33

The wise virgins prepared themselves NOT just for a present fire given by the Holy Spirit, but also one that would carry them through the darkness of night. They had internalized the Spirit of God. **It was not simply an outward manifestation that died out in time.** They had kept aside enough oil to dispel the future darkness. They were prepared for the night because they had enough oil.

The foolish virgins tried to buy some of the oil. **It is clear that it was not transferable. We cannot pass the Holy Spirit on to someone else.** The wise virgins were not selfish because the demand was impossible to meet. Everyone must get their own measure of the Holy Spirit. **Jesus is the baptizer of people not His church.** We can simply lay hands upon people but Jesus is the One who baptizes. We will never have enough “OIL” to pass on to others. God gives us each the measure that we require. We need to seek the **Giver** not the **Gift**. **If we seek Him who supplies for all our needs He will make sure we are prepared for the darkness ahead.**

II. The Power of Internalism (25:4,7,10b) (Contd.)

The Bible makes it clear that we must be ready when Jesus returns.

*“For as the lightning that comes from the east is visible in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man . . .
37. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man . . .
42. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come . . .
44. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”*

Matthew 24: 27,37,42,44

We better be sure that we have enough oil for the future! **This truth cannot be taken lightly in the Church.**

III. The Protection of Extremism (25:10c)

In chapter 24 of Matthew the story of Noah is used as an example to describe the time of the end of this age. We must remember that Noah preached for 100 years to prepare the people for the flood. He built an ark to save his family and the animals that God would summon in the ark's safety. The Bible then says that after Noah obeyed all that the LORD commanded him . . .

“Then the Lord shut him in.”

Genesis 7:16

This act of shutting Noah, his family and all the animals into the ark, was to protect them from the disastrous flood. By shutting the door behind Noah, God also shut the door so that no one else could enter. What became **inclusion** for the wise also became **exclusion** for the foolish. Far more perished than were saved. This parable builds upon the truth of the flood. Some have called this parable of the **“Rupture”** of the Church.

“But while they were on their way to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.”

Matthew 25:10

III. The Protection of Extremism (Matthew 25:10c) (Contd.)

These wise virgins were included into the wedding feast because they were prepared for the future. Many will seek to enter the kingdom of heaven AFTER the day of admission is passed. There is a time to knock, and a time to open, while there is also a time to close forever.

The Church must realize the door of hope will not always be open for our loved ones. I believe one of the greatest ways to protect ourselves against this false teaching is to be prepared at all times for the coming of the Lord. Do not place your eternity upon a false hope. Keep your light trimmed and bright unto the coming of the Lord. **MAKE SURE YOU ARE NOT JUST CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESENT. Don't live just one day at a time.**

The best way to protect ourselves against extremism is to be always watchful. Be on your guard. Don't let your defences down.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives

12. As you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming."

II Peter 3:10,11,12

Be ready! Keep steady!

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Date: Sept 1 & 8/19

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Faithful One - D, E

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INTRODUCTION: *Matthew 13:10-13; Matthew 25:1*

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Exodus 27:20-21; Exodus 30:32,33; Matthew 24: 27,37,42,44

III. The Protection of Extremism (25:10c)

Genesis 7:16; Matthew 25:10; II Peter 3:10,11,12