

THE TEN VIRGINS

25:1 Then the kingdom of heaven shall be like ten virgins taking their lamps, {Luc. 12. 35.} They went out to meet the husband. – "Allusion to a custom of the East. Weddings are held at night; The bridegroom goes in the afternoon, in the glow of the torches, to his bride's house, to take her for his wife and take her home. The wedding friends who surround the bride *go out to meet the bridegroom* on his arrival, and take part in the wedding ceremonies, as well as in the banquet that takes place in the house of the bridegroom" (Bonnet-Schroeder).

-- **lamps**, "LAMPS, denotes a torch ... frequently fed, like a lamp, with oil from a small container used for this purpose... contained little oil and needed frequent refilling" (W.E. Vine); literally "torches" Jn. 18:3.

25:2 Five of them were prudent and five were foolish. – They do not qualify as good and bad, but as foolish and prudent. Compare Matt. 7:24-27, wise and foolish. There is no significance in the numbers, that is, one should not conclude that half of the Christians will not be prepared, but what can be concluded is that some professing Christians will not be prepared because *they have not been transformed into the likeness of Christ* (Rom. 8:29; 12:1, 2; 2 Cor. 3:18; Ephes. 4:22-32), doing the corresponding works. They do not possess the qualities of character described in Matt. 5:3-9. They do not bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

25:3 The foolish ones, taking their lamps, did not take oil with them; this parable teaches that the preparation of some may not be adequate. In the above verses (Matthew 24:44-51) Jesus has stressed the need to be prepared, and in this parable of the ten virgins he gives an example of inadequate preparation. He also emphasizes that the time will come when it will be impossible to make preparation.

The foolish had oil only for a *profession* of faith. They had oil to be members of the church. They had oil to call themselves "Christians," "brothers," etc. They had oil to partake of the Lord's Supper and to contribute, but they did not take with them oil of *change of disposition, change of character, change of heart*, or of the *works* that demonstrated such change. Such members have the light of profession, but they are not the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). They are not true luminaries (Phil. 2:15, 16). Such people cannot withstand the temptations and trials of life Matt. 13:23.

In this way they manifested their disrespect for weddings. They were not very important to them. For some reason they did not buy oil for their lamps to be able to enter and participate in the celebration. It would have been *inconvenient* for them to buy oil. There was no time. Perhaps there was not even the desire to do so. They did not lack opportunity. It was not impossible for them, but they simply neglected it.

25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels, together with their lamps. – Each of the virgins had her own torch, but it was necessary for them to have additional oil

in vessels to be sure that their light did not go out. The wise are those who seek "the Lord while He can be found," and call Him "while He is near" (Isa. 55:6). They take advantage of the time God gives us to prepare. "It is necessary for me to do the works of him who sent me, while the day lasts; the night is coming, when no one can work" (Jn. 9:4). "Walk while you have light, that you may not be surprised by darkness" (Jn. 12:35).

25:5 And the bridegroom is delayed, -- Peter explains how the scoffers say that the Lord's delay is proof that He will not come, but then Peter explains the real reason (2 Pet. 3:4, 9, 15). This parable speaks of being prepared to "receive the bridegroom" who is slow to arrive (compare 24:48; 25:19). It is a very practical parable for us since the church is the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2, 3; Ephes. 5:25-27; Apoc. 19:7-9). Christ invites us to partake of the joy of this relationship with Him now and the joy of receiving the Lord when He comes. Only the *prepared* will be able to partake of this eternal joy.

-- **they all nodded and fell asleep.** This emphasizes the long delay of the bridegroom.

25:6 And at midnight (at the least expected hour, v. 13; 24:36, 42, 44, 50; 1 Thess. 5:1-8) **a cry was heard: Here comes the bridegroom; go out to meet him!** -- How terrible will this cry be for the unprepared when Christ comes! There will be much remorse and much anguish among the unprepared.

25:7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. -- This illustrates how men are commonly keen to be prepared when they know they are going to die. When Christ comes there will be no time to do anything.

25:8 And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us some of your oil; for our lamps are going out.-- During life the members of the church who are indifferent and worldly despise the careful preparation done by the faithful, believe that they are very strict and even call them fanatics, but when the Lord comes they will want a portion of that oil which they had despised. They are like Balaam who said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and my end be like his" (Num. 23:10), but the problem was that this prophet did not want to live the life of the righteous, but rather he loved the benefits of wickedness.

Now you can see that they were not all the same. They looked the same for a while, but now you see the difference. At first all ten had oil in their lamps, for they were all lit, but the folly was that five of them did not carry adequate supplies. Many texts speak of the need to remain faithful and grow after obeying the gospel, Matt. 5:10-12; 10:34-37; 13:20-23; 1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Ped. 1:7; 4:12; 2 Ped. 1:5-11.

This parable well illustrates the danger of the "minimum service" they offer to the Lord. "Is it a sin if we don't attend all the services?" "How much do we have to give?"

25:9 But the wise answered saying, "Lest there should not be enough for us and you, go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." Preparation is an individual duty. No one can do it for us. Luc. 17:10, "So you also, when you have done all that has been commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants, for what we ought to do, we have done."

No one may be baptized by others, nor attend for others, nor partake of the Lord's Supper for others, nor pray for others, nor visit the sick for others, etc. Everyone must develop the character of a Christian (Matt. 5:1-12; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; Gal. 5:22, 23; Ephes. 4:22-32; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). Therefore, everyone has to "go and buy" the preparation for himself. Prov. 23:23. Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10. The wise are always saying to the unwise, "Go to those who sell, and buy now; don't wait until it's too late."

25:10 But while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came; and those who were prepared went in with him to the wedding; and the door was closed. – wedding, that is, "wedding banquet". Compare Matt. 22:1-14. The bride and groom did not go on a wedding trip (honeymoon), but stayed at home and for a whole week celebrated their weddings with their family and best friends who treated them as if they were a prince and a princess. *It was the happiest week of their lives.* "This parable contains at least two universal warnings. (1) He warns us that there are certain things that cannot be obtained at the last minute. It is already too late for the student to prepare for their exams when the time has come to take them. When a man is offered a job it is already too late to acquire a skill or ability. The same goes for us and God... (2) It warns us that there are certain things that cannot be borrowed. The foolish virgins could not borrow oil when they discovered they needed it. Man cannot borrow a relationship with God; he must possess it..." (W. Barclay).

They recognized their mistake, accepted the good advice, "they were going to buy." **But, and** here is a frightening and sad "but": "But while they were going to buy, the husband came... and the door was closed." This text presents the picture of those who will be *almost* saved, but totally *lost*.

We must add another thought: the closed door not only excludes those who are not prepared, but also indicates the *safety* of those inside. Adam and Eve were for a time in a paradise, but the heavenly home is eternal, from which no one will leave. "Those who were prepared went in with him to the wedding." Compare Rev. 19:18. Therefore, Eccles. 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it according to your strength; for in Sheol, whence you go, there is no work, no knowledge, no wisdom."

25:11 Then the other virgins also came, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us! 12 But he answered and said, "Truly, I say to you, I do not know you. {Luke 13:25; Matt. 7:23; 2 Tim. 2:19; To know means "to approve"} 13 Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man shall come. -- The foolish virgins had slammed the door in their own faces when they decided it was

not worth buying oil for their lamps. The lost may blame everyone but themselves for their condition, but they themselves and no one else are to blame!

[Wayne Partain, June 22, 2023]