

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Matthew 25:1-13

The kingdom of heaven = the church

The bridegroom = Christ

The midnight arrival = the second advent

The virgins = church members

The wise virgins = the prepared

The foolish virgins = the unprepared

The lamps = (a) faith and (b) works

The oil = (a) the Spirit or (b) Christian character

The sleep of the virgins = the sleep of death

Tarrying of the bridegroom = delay of the second coming

The midnight cry = the call to judgment

Refusal to give oil = righteousness not transferrable

Exclusion of the foolish = rejection of unprepared

The shut door = the impossibility last minute salvation

Matthew 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

“... The kingdom of heaven shall be likened.” The third question asked by the disciples, Matt. 24:3, was about the end of the world. This whole chapter is an answer. The future tense is used. In most of the parables of the kingdom the present is used, because they describe its earthly features. This, however, portrays the closing events, the judgment, the closing of the heavenly gates.

The whole imagery of the parable is drawn from Eastern marriage customs. The betrothal, which took place long before the marriage, was a kind of solemn marriage contract, but preliminary to its final consummation. When the time for the celebration of the marriage came, the bridegroom came to the house of the bride and brought her by night to his own house. The virgin bridesmaids awaited his coming and attended the bride to the marriage feast.

(A) There is joy in the judgment for those who spend each day in preparation for the midnight hour. Remember, watch and pray.

(B) Ready for duty and prepared for joy.

Revelation 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

(C) *Ten virgins* - custom - ten friends of the bride.

(D) This is the kind of willing, joyful anticipation JESUS wanted for his disciples - us - the church, every day and every minute!

Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Matthew 25:2 And five of them were wise, and five [*were*] foolish.

The quality that made the difference between them was prudent forethought on the part of the wise.

Matt. 7:21-27 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Israel longed for the MESSIAH to come.

When HE did, they were not ready – Now the church?

Revelation 19:7-8 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Matthew 25:3 They that [*were*] foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Their job was to light the way for the procession from the bride's house to the bridegroom's house when he came to claim his bride.

Matthew 25:4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

In this their wisdom was displayed. They not only "let their light shine," but at the same time kept the grace renewed that was essential to the continuance of their light.

The *oil* - JESUS was anointed with the oil of gladness The Holy Spirit

Hebrews 1:9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, [*even*] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Acts 10: 38-40 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

Matthew 25:5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

They all slumbered and slept. Literally, "nodded and fell asleep." The thought is that the Bridegroom came at an unexpected moment He did not come when they expected.

***The bridegroom tarried* - The grace of GOD.**

Matthew 25:19 After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Isaiah 30:18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD [*is*] a God of judgment: blessed [*are*] all they that wait for him.

II Peter 3:8-10 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day [*is*] with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Matthew 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

Midnight is the hour of slumber and silence when an outcry is always startling and unexpected. The implication is that the cry of the coming of the Bridegroom, the trump of the archangel, will be sudden and unexpected.

It was a custom to send a courier announcing: *Behold, the bridegroom cometh!* None other but the Arch Angel announces the coming of Christ.

I Thessalonians 4:13-17 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [*and*] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive [*and*] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Matthew 25:7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

The object of trimming would be to secure a brighter light. It would involve the trimming of the wick and replenishing the oil if needed. When the cry does arise there will be a wonderful lamp-trimming.

Self examination –

Lamentations 3:40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

I Corinthians 11: 31-32 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

II Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Galatians 6:4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

I John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming

Matthew 25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

The RSV says, more correctly, "Our lamps are going out," They had kept up a flickering light to this time. Their apparent piety, though it satisfied them before, was not sufficient now. Shams disappear in the presence of death or judgment.

They should have known - and been ready - No excuse!

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

Luke 12:35-37 Let your loins be girded about, and [*your*] lights burning; 36 And ye your selves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37 Blessed [*are*] those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

Matthew 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, [*Not so*]; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

The wise virgins had sufficient for themselves, but none to spare, hence could be of no help. No one has a fund of surplus piety or righteousness that he can turn over to someone else. Go ye, . . . buy for yourselves. The advice is the best possible. Everyone had to procure for himself the needful salvation, grace, piety and righteousness.

(A) Jewish weddings were held at night.

(B) Sad, if they shared, there would not be enough oil to light the way and all their lamps would go out before they reached the bridegroom's house.

Matthew 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

They were now seeking to obtain the oil in the only legitimate appointed way, and all would have been well if they had attended to it at the proper time, but it was now too late. There is no encouragement to death-bed repentance. The door was shut. The door of the marriage feast chamber. The door of the kingdom stands open now, in life, to every mortal, but it will not always be so. The day of opportunity for everything passes.

The custom was to shut and lock the door.

Luke 13: 25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

1 Corinthians 15:50-55 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [*must*] put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where [*is*] thy sting? O grave, where [*is*] thy victory?

Matthew 25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

As Augustine said: "They came looking for mercy when it was time for judgment." also teaches that the doors finally will be shut. The shutting of the doors teaches that the day of salvation may pass us by.

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

They could not enter the joy!

There will be a hour that the time of salvation is over.

What is that like? Well, Korah went too far and found out.

Numbers 16:16-21 And Moses said unto Korah, Be thou and all thy company before the LORD, thou, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow: 17 And take every man his censer, and put incense in them, and bring ye before the LORD every man his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; thou also, and Aaron, each [*of you*] his censer. 18 And they took every man his censer, and put fire in them, and laid

incense thereon, and stood in the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with Moses and Aaron. 19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the congregation. 20 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.

Numbers 16:28-33 And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for [*I have*] not [*done them*] of mine own mind. 29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; [*then*] the LORD hath not sent me. 30 But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that [*appertain*] unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. 31 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that [*was*] under them: 32 And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that [*appertained*] unto Korah, and all [*their*] goods. 33 They, and all that [*appertained*] to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.

What became of Korah? He went down alive into the pit in 1,447 BC and 500 years later the Holy Spirit inspires David to write the 88TH Psalm. It is remarkable that Korah still has not figured out his situation is permanent.

Psalms 88:1-18 A Song [*or*] Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day [*and*] night before thee; 2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; 3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. 4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man [*that hath*] no strength: 5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. 6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. 7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted [*me*] with all thy waves. Selah. 8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: [*I am*] shut up, and I cannot come forth. 9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee. 10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise [*and*] praise thee? Selah. 11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? [*or*] thy faithfulness in destruction? 12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? 13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. 14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? [*why*] hidest thou thy face from me? 15 I [*am*]

afflicted and ready to die from [*my*] youth up: [*while*] I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. 16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. 17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. 18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, [*and*] mine acquaintance into darkness.

Matthew 22:14 For many are called, but few [*are*] chosen.

Matthew 25:12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

This means, I do not recognize you as persons entitled to enter. The claims that they might have had once had been forfeited.

Too late –

Numbers 14:40-45 And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we [*be here*], and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. 41 And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. 42 Go not up, for the LORD [*is*] not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. 43 For the Amalekites and the Canaanites [*are*] there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you. 44 But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. 45 Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, [*even*] unto Hormah.

1 Samuel 15:24-26 and Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. 26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

Jeremiah 8:20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

II Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Matthew 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

The whole parable is an illustration of this solemn admonition "Watch".

APPLICATION.--The Bridegroom is the Son of man; the time of the marriage is the coming to judgment; the tarrying is the long and unknown period between his ascension and his return; the virgins represent the waiting church; the wise virgins represent those church members who are always ready and whose lights are shining; the oil in their vessels is the means by which their light is supplied; the foolish virgins are church members who have become sinful, cold and lifeless; the midnight cry is the summons of death, or the trump of judgment; the cry for oil is death-bed repentance, or an attempt at preparation in the face of judgment; the shut door is a declaration that such repentance is too late to be of any avail; the great lesson is to always be in a state of readiness.

TODAY could be our LAST DAY!

1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

Revelation 16: 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed [is] he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Sources: KJV, theWord.com, Clarks Commentary, BW Johnson's Peoples New Testament Commentary.