
Matthew

Bible Study

The Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1—13

At the beginning of Matthew 24 the Disciples ask Jesus about when the end-time events will occur and what will be the sign of His coming and of the end of the world. They ask this because Jesus had just told them that not one stone here would be left upon another which will not be torn down (Matthew 24:2; Luke 19:44). This was said about Jerusalem and the temple.

In answer to the Disciples, Jesus tells them what will happen before, during and after the Tribulation, including the Second Coming and the final gathering of believers to bring them into the Kingdom. Along with this went a number of warnings including a caution to beware of false Christs and prophets. They are also told to be alert for His coming and to watch for the signs of the end. These are things that will give the Little Flock encouragement to make it to the end as spiritual darkness sweeps over the world. They are encouraged to be faithful servants, doing what the Master has instructed them.

Having just told the Disciples to stay alert, watching for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus tells a parable illustrating what He has been talking about. Remember, parables were designed to hide spiritual truth from those who already had rejected Jesus' teaching (Matthew 13: 10). Jesus spoke to believers to help them understand spiritual truths. In this case the parable of the 10 virgins illustrates and expands upon what Jesus had been teaching the Disciples.

The 10 virgins recap

There were five wise virgins and five foolish virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps but only the wise brought enough oil to keep the lamps lit. The bridegroom was delayed, it was now midnight and all ten virgins had fallen asleep. Suddenly the bridegroom's arrival was announced and the virgins awoke and trimmed their lamps but only the wise virgins had brought oil to refill their lamps. While the foolish virgins went off to buy oil the bridegroom came and those who were ready were escorted into the wedding feast.

Characters

There are three main characters; the wise virgins, the foolish virgins and the bridegroom. Almost everyone agrees that the bridegroom is Christ making this an eschatological parable. One disagreement is whether this parable is looking to the Rapture or the Second Coming. From a mid-Acts position, it is obvious that this is all about Christ coming to set up His Kingdom at the Second Coming. Those who were ready for Him are brought into the wedding feast.

Understanding who the virgins are isn't quite so easy. Most people will say the church is in view here so those who are saved are the wise virgins while the unbelievers are the foolish virgins. They then would interpret the oil as being the Holy Spirit. A true understanding will come through Scripture as it defines whom these virgins are.

The virgins

Since these virgins are part of a parable we know that they are spoken of metaphorically. Jeremiah 31 is a look at Israel in the future as true Israel is gathered up and brought into the Kingdom. In verse 4 true Israel is called virgin Israel. This special group has survived the Tribulation without taking the mark of the beast and has been found pure and unadulterated from the contamination of Satan's advances. Believing Israel will be brought into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and presented to Christ as pure and chaste ready to be united with Him for all eternity.

This picture of Israel being the bride conforms to Israel's marriage rites. The couple is first betrothed to each other and approximately one year later will be united in a wedding ceremony. It is during this betrothal period that the future bride is proven to be a faithful virgin. When Mary was found with child Joseph could

have had her stoned for infidelity but decided to just put her away. God intervened and told Joseph that the child was from God and that he was to take Mary as his wife.

Likewise, Israel was in a betrothal period waiting for the wedding (Jeremiah 2:1—3; Hosea 2:19—20). But Israel defiled herself by seeking other gods corrupting herself to the point of becoming unmarriageable (Jeremiah 2:21—23; Ezekiel 6:9; 23:30). When Christ was on earth one of His missions was to create a new nation (Matthew 21:43) by pulling believers out of Israel to form the Little Flock. This true Israel will be the unadulterated virgin who will become the bride of Christ.

The book of Revelation speaks of 144,000 virgins who were not defiled with women. Although this certainly can be taken literally, it is also clear that false gods are portrayed as women so that those who refused to follow false doctrines were the ones who remained pure. Revelation 2:20 states that there are those in the church at Thyatira who are following the doctrine of Jezebel, an evil, pagan-worshipping queen in the Old Testament. The false doctrines of Babylon are also pictured as a woman in Revelation 17:3—6, 18. Those who give in to the seduction of these false doctrines will have defiled themselves making them unqualified for taking part in the wedding feast.

It appears that these virgins were ones who did not defile themselves with the doctrine of false Gods.

Wise and unwise

There is a qualification that divides these virgins into two parts. The wise in Scripture is pictured as those who are spiritually wise having accepted correct doctrine while the foolish reject any form of godly wisdom. This concept can be found in Matthew where we learn that the wise man built his house upon the rock while the foolish did so on sand (Matthew 7:25). Job 28:28, Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10, all states the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom comes from God, foolishness from outside of God.

By applying this to the parable of the virgins we can understand that the wise virgins were wise because they were trusting in God while the foolish virgins were trusting in false gods. They all looked like they were on the same team but at the Second Coming (the coming of the Bridegroom) there will be a separation between the righteous and unrighteous. This same concept is illustrated in the parable of the wheat and the tares where the two appear alike until the harvest. Only one bears fruit (Matthew 13:24—30). This is why the Disciples are warned to be alert to false prophets coming into the church (Matthew 7:15; 24:11, 24). They will appear to be believers but are satanic.

Be ready, stay alert

The foolish virgins went off to buy some oil for their lamps. Since only those who take the mark of the beast can buy and sell we can see what side of the fence they are on. The little bit of oil they had was used up and they need to see in the dark. Though oil is often a picture of the Holy Spirit, it doesn't fit this parable. The unwise virgins had a little bit of oil but not enough to get them through to the arrival of the Bridegroom. It seems that the oil could represent doctrine. Those who accept correct doctrine are able to enter the Kingdom while those who heard but rejected the doctrine of the Kingdom were found to be unready.

These five wise virgins were ushered into the kingdom to be wedded to Christ because they had resisted the pull to follow false doctrine and were thus found ready when He came. As they go into the Kingdom, the door is shut disallowing those who were not ready from entering. Pleading to gain entrance was futile because they were strangers who had no right to take part in the festivities.

I do not know you

Those who are rejected from the Kingdom will claim to have been doing the Lord's work (Matthew 7:21—23; 25:41—46). The unbelievers who are doing miracles are doing so under Satan's power. Just as Pharaoh's magicians could recreate some of the miracles that Moses did, Satan will be deceiving many during the Tribulation by imitating the very things the Disciples are doing. Even today we see so-called miracles performed at the hands of faith healers. Since God has withdrawn the special Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 13:8) someone claiming to be able to heal must receive his power from Satan.

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