

STUDY TWENTY – YOUR SPIRITUAL STATE WILL DETERMINE YOUR FUTURE!

INTRODUCTION

When I was a young man, the verse in which Jesus said that *"men's hearts would fail them for fear"* (see Luke 21:26) was a distant concept. But the more I study Scripture and the events surrounding the Rapture — which will signal the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the Tribulation — the more I understand that we are right near the end.

And as one would naturally prepare himself and his household for a dangerous storm that's brewing, we as believers must not neglect the signs of the times, nor the warnings of the Holy Spirit that are eminently resounding as we catapult toward the conclusion of a long era in history. Scripture gives an admonition to continually heed throughout our lives: *"...It is high time to awake out of sleep: for now, is our salvation nearer than when we believed"* (Romans 13:11).

CHRIST'S COMING AND THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

In Matthew 25, in which Jesus describes ten virgins, five of whom had oil in their lamps and were ready for the arrival of the bridegroom — and another five who were not ready for the bridegroom's arrival. In this parable, the second set of five virgins ran out of oil in their lamps before the bridegroom arrived, and as a result, they were barred from entering the long-awaited marriage celebration.

It is difficult to form doctrine on the parable of the ten virgins or on any one scripture or passage without the corroboration of other verses. But one thing we are clear on is that this parable speaks of Christ's coming. And the content of the passage gives a clear warning of the need to be spiritually alive, alert, and prepared at the time of His coming for the Church.

As such, the Church is represented as the virgins — and Christ, as the bridegroom.

According to the parable, five virgins are wise and five virgins are unwise. This should alert us that there are various types of people in the Church — some who will be ready for His arrival and others who will not be ready to meet the Bridegroom at His promised coming. I don't often teach on this subject, and some ministers refuse to touch it in their pulpits for various reasons. Again, I state that it is difficult to form doctrine on the basis of the parable of the ten virgins. Nevertheless, this passage without doubt sends a warning of our need to be diligent and to do all that is necessary to be ready for Christ when He returns for His Church. It is imperative that we hear Christ's warning in this parable and take it deeply to our hearts.

Let's look at this parable in its entirety.

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. "Afterward the other

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virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (Matthew 25:1-13)

Notice in the parable all ten virgins — the wise and the unwise — had "lamps" with them. The fact that these virgins carried such lamps suggests the virgins were ready to wait a long time if necessary. In Jewish culture, the marriage event usually started at night, such lamps were needed to provide light for the bridegroom's arrival at the ceremony's venue. The ceremony occurred in phases, and the exact timing of the bridegroom's arrival was not always known,' so it was needful for those who were waiting to have enough oil to provide light until the bridegroom finally arrived.

Matthew 25:1 tells us that each of the ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom. The word "meet" is interpreted from a word that typically depicts a grand encounter. It is reminiscent of Paul's words in First Thessalonians 4:17 where he wrote, *"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..."*

But it is interesting to note that in Jewish weddings, the bridegroom was responsible for going to prepare a place for his bride before he returned to take her to their new home. This is exactly why Jesus said in John 14:2-3, *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."* As the Bridegroom of the Church, Christ likewise went away to prepare a place for the Church. Since the time He ascended to Heaven nearly 2,000 years ago, He has been preparing a place, and one day soon He will come again to receive us unto Himself.

FIVE WERE WISE AND FIVE WERE FOOLISH

In Matthew 25:2, we find that five virgins were "wise" and five virgins were "foolish." The word "foolish" is translated from the plural form of the Greek word *moros*, a word that depicts one who is dense, dull, or slow. It portrays a person who is foolish and therefore a fool. On the other hand, the word "wise" is from the plural form of the Greek word that picture one who is intelligent and therefore considered to be wise. These two categories are intended to represent two types of people. First, the unwise virgins represent people who are spiritually dense, dull, or slow. Second, the wise virgins represent people who are spiritually intelligent, fully engaged in their faith, and therefore wise in the way they live as they await the Lord's return.

Jesus states in this parable that in addition to taking the oil that had been poured into their lamps early on, the wise virgins knew to bring an extra supply of oil with them in case the bridegroom's arrival came later than anticipated. They were prepared with a supply large enough to last however much time was needed until the bridegroom finally appeared. On the other hand, the foolish virgins only took a short supply of oil — not enough to last until the arrival of the bridegroom.

THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED AND THE VIRGINS SLEPT

Matthew 25:5 then says, *"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."* The fact that they all slumbered and they all slept alerts us that the bridegroom's arrival came much later than any one of them initially anticipated. But this verse tells us that the bridegroom "tarried." The word "tarried" is from a word which means to delay, to linger, or to tarry, and it speaks of one who takes a longer time than anticipated to do something.

In our earlier studies, I wrote about Peter's words that say God is not slow concerning His promise to us that Christ will return (see 2 Peter 3:9). If His return is "slower," or longer in coming, than anticipated, it's

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because God is waiting for that last sinner to repent and come to Christ as his Savior so he can escape the eternal judgment of hell. James alluded to this as well with his own words: *"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain [with its ensuing harvest]"* (James 5:7).

Although it doesn't give a reason why, according to Matthew 25, the bridegroom was, in fact, delayed, and all ten of the virgins became weary and "slumbered." Metaphorically, "slumbered" is used to picture those who waited and waited for the Lord's soon arrival, but because it took longer than expected, they may have grown weary and fallen into a state of slumber — or indifference, or even hostility and scorn — because His coming did not occur as soon as they expected.

A CRY IS MADE AND THE BRIDEGROOM'S APPROACHING IS ANNOUNCED

Finally in Matthew 25:6, we read, *"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him."* The words "at midnight" in the original Greek text say in the very middle of the night and imply the very darkest moment of the night. This idea agrees with the Greek word which is translated "caught away" in First Thessalonians 4:17, and it is where we derive the idea of the Rapture. As we have seen, the Greek word depicts a catching away just in the nick of time, and it strongly suggests that the rapture of the Church will occur in a very dark moment.

AT THE MIDNIGHT HOUR, THEY TRIMMED THEIR LAMPS

In the parable we were studying in Matthew 25, at about midnight, or in the darkest moment of the night, suddenly, all ten virgins clearly understood the announcement that the time had finally come for the bridegroom to arrive. Matthew 25:7 says that in response to His approaching arrival, *"all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps."* But after the foolish virgins realized their lamps had run dry and they didn't have an additional supply with which to refill them, Matthew 25:8 tells us that *"the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."* The words "gone out" mean to extinguish and picture something depleted or that has run dry.

Matthew 25:9 tells us the unwise virgins pleaded with the wise virgins to share their oil with them, but the wise answered, saying, *'... No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell and buy for yourselves.'*

In response, the foolish virgins left their posts and went away to see if they could quickly find more oil. But Matthew 25:10 says, *"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."* Matthew 25:10 says the wise virgins — those who'd made sure they had enough oil to replenish their lamps — were "ready" and went in with the bridegroom to the marriage celebration. The word "ready" is translated from a form of the Greek word which is a word that depicts a state of readiness or preparedness. The Early New Testament Church as a whole lived in a state of fiery readiness and fervent expectation of Christ's return. That state of spiritual readiness empowered them to, by the power of the Holy Spirit, turn the world "upside down" in their generations.

God is stirring the current New Testament Church to a similar state of readiness in preparation for a move of His Spirit that has the potential to turn this evil age on edge as many are gloriously swept into the Kingdom.

THE WISE WENT WITH HIM TO THE WEDDING — AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT

For the virgins who were unprepared in this parable, the penalty was severe, but they knew full well that having oil in their lamps was a requirement to be admitted to the wedding. So, while this penalty is

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severe, it was fully known to them that if they had no oil in their lamps when the bridegroom arrived, they would not be admitted. Thus, the five virgins called wise were so named because they were diligent to make sure they carried enough oil for a longer period of waiting. The five virgins called foolish were so named because of a lack of diligence, resulting in their running out of oil before the bridegroom arrived. When the bridegroom finally arrived, only the wise virgins were ready and therefore invited to join the celebration.

I KNOW YOU NOT

Matthew 25:11 says after the door was shut and it was too late to be admitted to the wedding celebration, the other unprepared virgins cried out at the door, "...Lord, Lord, open to us."

The word "open" is a word that signifies the opening of a door to allow access. So even though they had failed to be ready on time, the foolish virgins somehow wrongly assumed that the bridegroom would nevertheless have mercy on them, overlook their lack of diligence, override the already stated conditions for entry, and open. Although the unwise virgins pounded on the door and pleaded to be admitted, it was too late, for the door was closed and locked shut, and no latecomers were to be granted entrance. Twice the unwise virgins cried out, "Lord, lord," but the bridegroom answered them, "I do not know you."

in Matthew 7:21-23, *"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* Likewise, in Matthew 25:12, the bridegroom answers the five foolish virgins, "... 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'"

'WATCH THEREFORE'

Finally in Matthew 25:13, Jesus finalizes this parable by warning: *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*

At last, Jesus explains that the entire parable is about His coming for those who are waiting for Him with "oil in their lamps" — prepared and ready. And Christ's final declaration in His parable is that it is imperative that we respond to this message by determining to stay alert and to "watch therefore" for the arrival of "the Son of Man."

The word "watch" is from the Greek word that depicts one on high alert or one whose attitude is to never let up in being attentive, watchful, and wide awake. Then Jesus states the reason we must be watchful: *"... for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."* The word "day" in this verse refers to a specific day, and the word "hour" refers to an exact hour. This means that even if we sense we are in the season of the Lord's coming, it is not possible to pinpoint the exact day or exact hour when Christ will descend into the lower atmosphere to snatch away His people to Himself.

I want you to understand from this parable that Jesus knew His coming would come later than many in the Church ever expected. Thus, we must respond to the Parable of the Ten Virgins as a divine admonition to *"be holy even as He is holy"* (see 1 Peter 1:15-16) — to walk closely with Him in a constant state of readiness for any moment that the Lord will come. He will come *"as a thief in the night"* (see 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10) — *"at any moment."* We must determine to continually have a full supply of oil in our lamps, maintaining the fires of the Spirit in our hearts that burned so brightly when we first believed.