

## **PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (Matthew 25:1-13) – BE VIGILANT!**

The parable of the Ten Virgins is one of two parables given by Christ to His disciples immediately after He revealed some of the signs that will occur before His Second Coming. These signs are prophetic. They are called signs of the last days. The last days refer to the final days of man's existence on this earth. All of earth's territories and borders and nations will cease. Man's entire economic system of trade and industries and businesses will be demolished, never to rise again from the ashes. Man's power and dominance over one another will be permanently destroyed and his greed, fuelled by his pride, will become a thing of the past and buried forever in the sands of time. There will not be a phoenix-like resurrection of man's wicked devices designed to satisfy his insatiable appetite for lusts. In short, this world as we know it will cease to exist for all eternity. The Second Coming of Christ will be absolutely final.

The revelation of these signs prior to the end times are given to his children by our Lord for a purpose. They were not meant to be conversation pieces during dinner time because we have run out of things to say. Our Lord does not wish any of His children to be caught off guard and not be ready for His return. God's children must not flitter their lives away on inconsequential things and events. This parable of the Ten Virgins warns us about the consequences and pitfalls of apathy and spiritual lethargy.

**Elements of the Parable** – Wedding refers to the Second Coming of Christ; the five wise virgins refer to Christians; the five foolish virgins refer to professing Christians;

**Explanation of the Parable** – A Jewish wedding is very different from a Christian wedding. The Jewish wedding is divided into many parts. Barnes' comment on the Jewish wedding: "The *lamps* used on such occasions were rather *torches* or *flambeaux*. They were made by winding rags around pieces of iron or earthenware, sometimes hollowed so as to contain oil, and fastened to handles of wood. These torches were dipped in oil, and gave a large light. Marriage ceremonies in the East were conducted with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of marriage was performed commonly in the open air, on the banks of a stream. Both the bridegroom and bride were attended by friends; they were escorted in a *palanquin*, carried by four or more persons. After the ceremony of marriage it was followed by a feast of seven days if the bride was a virgin, or three days if she was a widow. This feast was celebrated in her father's house. At the end of that time the bridegroom conducted the bride, with great pomp and splendour, to his own home. This was done in the evening, or at night, Jer 7:34; 25:10; 33:11. Many friends and relations attended them; and besides those who went with them from the house of the bride, there was another company that came out from the house of the bridegroom to meet them, and welcome them. These were probably female friends and relatives of the bridegroom, who went out to welcome him and his new companion to their home. These are the virgins mentioned in this parable." The certainty of the bridegroom's coming is never in doubt. The timing depended entirely upon

the bridegroom's desire. The duty of the virgins was to wait patiently with their lamps well lit, ready to join in the procession when the bridegroom appeared.

The chiasmic structure in this parable (see verses 2-4—wise-foolish-foolish-wise) highlights the contrasting behaviour of the two groups. The five wise virgins took extra oil for their lamps whereas the five foolish virgins did not. These lamps were small and could not contain too much oil. The foolish virgins were aware of the extra oil that the wise virgins took. The foolish virgins deliberately did not take extra. It was not due to ignorance on their part.

At midnight, the call came that the groom was coming! When the bridegroom finally arrived all of them were supposed to meet him with their lamps all trimmed and bright. All of them hurriedly trimmed the burnt portion of the wick of their lamps and then poured in more oil into their small lamps. The five wise virgins brought their extra oil. They were well prepared for the bridegroom's coming. The five foolish virgins asked for some but the wise could not give for fear that they might not have sufficient for themselves. The foolish virgins were told to get the oil from those who sell oil. While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived and the five wise virgins with their lamps burning brightly followed the bridegroom to the marriage. Once they entered the house, the door would be shut. Later, the five foolish virgins came and said, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the reply was that the bridegroom did not know any of them.

**Application of the Parable** – The certainty of the Second Coming of Christ is never in doubt. It will certainly take place. Now if this is what is revealed to us in the Scriptures, then true and genuine Christians must believe. If we truly believe then we must be prepared. Readiness cannot be shared or transferred to another. It is most personal for it is our lives that we are preparing. We are prepared when we love not the world. We are prepared if we are faithfully reading and studying God's holy and perfect Word. We tell others about Christ. We pray without ceasing. We faithfully serve Christ in church and in school (for students) and at home (for housewives) and at the work place. Our lives are motivated by the love for Christ. We are strangers in this world. Our longing is for heaven. Our treasure is heavenward and so is our heart's desire.

The five foolish virgins are professing Christians who say they believe, but with their heads and lips only, not with their lives. Professing Christians lust after the things and accolades of the world. They do not tell others about Christ. They do not pray. They have no love for God's perfect Word. They love the world, and their roots and confidence are in the world. They know about Christ but do not know Christ and Christ definitely does not know them.

Failure to be vigilant after knowing the signs and the certainty of Christ's return is a mark of a professing Christian. A true Christian will believe his heavenly Father. He will want to please his heavenly Father like a loving obedient son. Jesus aptly concludes the parable with

this warning, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Be vigilant and not slothful.