

The Wise & Foolish Virgins

Matthew 25:1-3

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12/22/2019



Matthew 25:1-13

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ 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.’ ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Is this parable a message for the church or for tribulation-era people?

- It is primarily for tribulation era people because of the context. Note that it doesn't mention the bride who you'd expect to be with to bridesmaids. So, this message is primarily to those who are invited to the wedding party; it is implied that the bride would be there.
- Even though this message is primarily targeted at tribulation-era people, this doesn't mean there is not an application for people during the Church Age.

So, while keeping in mind the original target audience, we will look at the time-less principles represented here and consider the applications for our own times...

V1 – What is the kingdom of heaven?

It is the body of faithful believers who will be spending eternity with the Lord.

Who do the ten virgins represent?

The ten virgins are those people in the world who profess to follow Christ.

What is the role of a bridesmaid?

They are to prepare for being a bride.

Given that the role of a bridesmaid is to prepare for being a bride...

What is the theme of this parable?

Bridal preparation is the theme

Application: What is our purpose?

To prepare for eternity

What are the virgins in this parable to do?

They are to meet the Bridegroom to give honor to Him.

What should the virgins be doing until the Bridegroom comes?

They are to watch for Him.

How is watching for Jesus to return central to living righteously today?

Titus 2:12-13 – We should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ

Knowing Christ's return is imminent motivates us to live a life honoring Him. If He is unlikely to return in our lifetime, we can put off getting our act together.

What is the purpose of the lamps that the virgins have?

Just as the Bridegroom's procession will have lights, the bride adds to this light with her own to honor Him.

Phil 2:15 – In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world

V2-4 – What differences were there between the ten virgins?

Their character was that 5 were wise and 5 foolish.

What was the folly of the five foolish virgins?

- They did not have oil for their lamps to honor the Bridegroom when He came.
- Their being ready to meet the Bridegroom was only for show; they were hypocrites.
- They did not consider what is to come.

What did the oil represent?

The oil is the Holy Spirit...

Luke 4:18 – The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel...

What was the wisdom of the wise virgins?

- They heeded the warning signs about their need for oil (having the Holy Spirit).
- They were prepared to meet the Bridegroom with the oil needed to be in the procession (they were secure in their relationship with God).

Why did the foolish virgins have a false sense of security?

- They lived superficially and didn't think they would need the oil (Holy Spirit).
- They did not have a relationship with the Bridegroom. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer would say, they trusted in "cheap grace."

How do we come by the Holy Spirit?

1 John 4:15 – Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

The Holy Spirit indwells all who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:16 - do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

V5 – What was the common fault of the both wise and foolish virgins?

They all slumbered and slept during the Bridegroom's delay. They stopped watching for the Bridegroom.

What does the slumber and sleep represent?

All the virgins got caught up in their present circumstances and forgot why they were there.

Luke 18:8 – when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?

The foolish interpreted His delay as uncertainty that He would come.

V6 – What is significant about the Bridegroom coming at midnight?

- This is when we least look for Him and are most disposed to slumber.
- Midnight is when it is darkest; the Lord's way is always just in time.

How do other biblical midnight events help us better understand this?

- God kills firstborn of Egypt, Exodus 11-12.
 - A time of judgment.
- Israel eats unleavened bread of haste, Ex 12.
 - Ready for an epic journey.
- Boaz discovers Ruth at his feet, Ruth 3:8.
 - It is the time of harvest and redemption.
- Paul and Silas delivered from jail, Acts 16.
 - It is the time of deliverance.

What does the cry accomplish?

It awakens the virgins so they may go out to meet the Bridegroom.

Does this cry mean that something must precede the rapture?

- The cry initiates the rapture.
- The foolish virgins know it is taking place but are excluded due to lack of preparation.

V7-8 – If the foolish virgins had no oil, why did their lamps light at all?

They had only residue since they went out at the same time; or they may have only claimed they were lit to look less foolish.

V9 – Why couldn't the wise virgins share their oil?

You need a full lamp to go the distance and that may only be obtained at the source of the oil.

- Genuine faith comes from God, not from God's children!

Luke 11:13 – your heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

What is significant of the foolish virgins not being able to buy oil?

- The time will come when it is too late to prepare for eternity.
- We all need to do our business with God in the light of the day.

John 9:4 – I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work

V10 – When will it become apparent who the real believers & nonbelievers are?

- When Jesus returns...
- Only those ready will be taken to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

V11 – Why did the foolish virgins think they could be at the wedding after missing the procession?

They thought their intention to be part of the procession was good enough; they did not know the Bridegroom enough to realize that it is necessary to honor Him with our lives.

Matthew 10:32 – Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father

What is the significance of the door being shut?

The time will come for everyone when it is too late to enter into a relationship with Christ.

Hebrews 9:27 – it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment

...So never put off being prepared for eternity.

V12 – Why didn't the bridegroom know the foolish virgins?

They did not know the bridegroom enough to be prepared for his surprise arrival.

What is the significance of the Groom saying "I do not know you?"

If the virgins had a true personal relationship with the Bridegroom, they would have been ready for His coming.

Note: There will be many who profess the name of Christ and do great things in His name that will not spend eternity with Him because they did not have a genuine personal relationship with Him.

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!'*

Does this parable make our salvation uncertain until Christ comes?

No, it seeks to warn those with false assurance...
...having a form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Timothy 13:5)

V13 – How should we apply not knowing when the Lord is coming?

We need to be ready all the time; conduct our lives as if He could call us out in the next second.