

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

- **Scriptures**
 - Matthew 25:1-13
- **Context**
 - Parable begins with the word "*Then*"
 - what preceded this parable?
 - Matthew 24 – discussion of the Second Coming of Christ
 - *verse 3 – "what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world"*
 - *verse 6 – "but the end is not yet"*
 - *verse 13 – "endure unto the end"*
 - *verse 14 – "then shall the end come"*
- **Customs**
 - "If you want to understand the many metaphors, illustrations and figures of speech used by Jesus about 'the wedding feast' and the church as the 'bride of Christ,' you must learn the ancient culture and forget everything you know about modern marriage ceremonies."
 - *The Three Stage Ritual of Bible Marriages* by Steve Rudd
 - Three stages leading to marriage:
 - **Engagement**
 - not binding
 - could occur in childhood
 - could occur one year before the betrothal
 - usually carried out by the parents
 - marriage was not an agreement between two people but between two families
 - couple may not know each other or have seen each other
 - not uncommon for the bride and groom to not see each other until the wedding day
 - father of the groom made the arrangements
 - **dowry**
 - bride greatly contributed to her family
 - tending the sheep
 - working in the field
 - dowry was in a way a compensation for the loss of work to the bride's family
 - not the same as purchasing a slave
 - *Genesis 24:53 – "And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things."*
 - rich father – a dowry of land or female slaves
 - Jacob – a dowry of service to Laban
 - King Saul – required the lives of 100 Philistines for David to marry Michal
 - Fathers who could afford it would give part of the dowry to the daughter
 - her wealth in case the marriage does not work out
 - **Betrothal**
 - happened when couple was of age to marry
 - groom traveled to home of the bride
 - paid the purchase price
 - established the marriage covenant
 - all terms of the contract were often written down

- dowry price, bride's assets (property, livestock, etc)
 - signed by groom and bride's father
 - similar to signing the marriage license today
- groom returned to his father's house
 - prepared living accommodations for his bride
 - in his father's house
 - for a period of 12 months
- feasting and ceremony (almost on the same scale as the wedding)
- as binding as marriage
 - if the man died after betrothal, the woman was considered a "widow"
 - a betrothal could only be broken by a divorce
 - couple did not have sexual relations
 - example: Mary and Joseph
- but not same as the wedding (a separate event)
 - *Deuteronomy 20:7* – "And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her?"
- **Wedding**
 - occurred one year after the betrothal
 - very costly affair
 - jewels braided into the bride's hair
 - bride wears the family jewels
 - if bride's family was poor, they would borrow what they could from friends
 - bride always remembered her wedding garments/jewels
 - *Jeremiah 2:32* – "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?"
 - time unknown to the bride
 - groom's father determined the time
 - groom's arrival was preceded by a shout
 - lets the bride know the groom is coming
 - wedding takes place in the bride's father's home
 - a week of feasting
 - groom escorted his bride to his father's house
 - groom was dressed as a king (if he could afford it)
 - some wore a gold crown or a "garland of fresh flowers" (*Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*)
 - *Isaiah 61:10* – ". . . he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."
 - everyone followed the procession
 - "Everyone from six to sixty will follow the marriage drum" (old Jewish saying).
- **Outline of the Parable**
 - *verse 1* – "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."
 - "shall . . . be" – Jesus is describing what it will be like
 - once Jesus paid the price (Calvary) and sent His Spirit (Pentecost)
 - then the kingdom was established
 - at this point it was still coming ("shall . . . be")

- "lamps" – they had salvation
 - *"salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (Isaiah 62:1)*
- "ten virgins" – all part of the kingdom, all had an experience
 - no one is part of the kingdom unless they are truly born again
 - these virgins were all part of God's church
 - *Revelation 14:4* – virgins are those who *"follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"*
 - "Reportedly, Talmudic authorities said there were usually ten lamps in a bridal procession. It was a common size of a wedding party" (Enduring Word).
- "bridegroom"
 - *Luke 5:33-35* – it is Jesus
 - *Ephesians 5:23* – Jesus & church compared to husband and wife relationship
 - *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church"*
 - dowry – purchase price for the bride
 - *Acts 20:28* ". . . the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
- bride
 - not mentioned in this parable but implied
 - who is she?
 - *Revelation 21:2* – *"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."*
 - this happened in the morning time of the Gospel Day
 - church was instituted on the Day of Pentecost
 - *2 Corinthians 11:2* – *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."*
 - *espoused* – promised, betrothed
- marriage has already happened
 - *Revelation 19:7* – *"for the marriage of the Lamb is come"*
 - *"is come"* – present tense
 - *Romans 7:4* – *"ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead"*
 - *Ephesians 5:31-32* – *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."*
 - *Revelation 21:9* *"I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife"*
 - wife requires a marriage
 - *Isaiah 66:8* *"as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children"*
 - if "Zion" (the church) is having children (new converts) before the marriage, what would that make her?
 - *Galatians 4:26* – calls Jerusalem (the church) the *"mother of us all"*
 - some say the marriage does not take place until the end of time
 - is she a mother before marriage?
 - having marital relations before marriage is sin
 - would this be an accurate portray of Christ & His church?
- marriage occurs in the bride's home
 - Christ left His Father's house (Heaven) to come to earth (bride's home)
 - there was a period of betrothal
 - then there was the marriage
 - marriage supper (Jewish customs) lasted 7 days

- examples:
 - **Jacob & Leah**
 - *Genesis 29:27 – "fulfill her week"*
 - Bible center reference – "seven days' feast"
 - **Samson & wife**
 - *Judges 14:10 – "Samson made there a feast"*
 - *Judges 14:12 – "seven days of the feast"*
 - then the groom took his bride to his father's house
 - another feast took place
 - Gospel Day = 7 days
 - then Christ will return to His Father's house with His wife
 - *1 Corinthians 15:24 – "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father."*
 - place of final, permanent dwelling (Heaven)
- **verses 2-4** – *"And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."*
 - foolish – no extra oil
 - wise – extra supply
 - no obvious difference between the two groups at this point
 - *oil* = Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13)
 - a picture of people relying on what they once had (spiritual experience)
 - must have a fresh, up-to-date experience
 - cannot rely on past experiences
- **verse 5** – *"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."*
 - *"all slumbered and slept"*
 - compare to spirit of our time – lukewarm (Revelation 3:16)
 - notice, none were wide awake
 - compare:
 - *"slumbered"* – became sleepy, drowsy
 - *"slept"* – sleeping and continuing to sleep
 - compare to Enchanted Ground (*Pilgrim's Progress*)
 - everything was going well
 - a time when "spiritual and moral efforts are relaxed" (Bunyan Ministries)
 - sleeping = inactive (spiritually speaking), affected by the ideas, opinions of the world
 - what puts you to sleep spiritually? (Media, parties, success, etc.)
 - how to stay awake?
 - keep God first in everything (your day, your life, your friend choices, etc.)
- **verse 6** – *"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."*
 - *"at midnight"* – not the end of time (door shutting is the end of time)
 - *"a cry made"*
 - *Jonah 1:2 – "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."*
 - *Jonah 3:2 – "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching"*

that I bid thee."

- *John 1:23 – "He [John the Baptist] said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."*
 - *Matthew 3:1 – "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching"*
 - cry is preaching
- preaching will not take place after the end
- *"bridegroom cometh"* – leaving for the Father's house

- *verse 7 – "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps."*
 - *"all these virgins"* – the cry (preaching) brought about an universal awakening
 - a final opportunity
 - *"all . . . arose"* – all are awakened; not all act appropriately
 - *"trimmed"* – put in order, arranged (Strong's Concordance)
 - *"trimmed their lamps"* is literally "put their torches in order" (France)
 - "put their lamps in order" (*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*)
 - trimming the wick – cutting off the burnt part and adding extra oil
 - what needs to be "trimmed" off in your Christian life?
 - what prevents your light from shining as it should?
 - lack of light made it darker
 - lack of light made it easier to go to sleep
 - "A poorly trimmed wick creates a flame which is dim and smokey" (Wikipedia)
 - what does a poorly trimmed wick in a Christian look like?
 - "dim and smokey" – not able to see clearly
 - causes confusion by how he or she lives
 - says one thing and does something else
 - what are some things that cause a Christian's light to be dim?
 - *Matthew 5:16 – "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*
 - keeping your lamp trimmed and brightly burning is not just for you
 - so others can see it too (a witness)
 - Aaron (priest) came into God's presence twice a day
 - to *"dresseth the lamps [trim]"* and to light the lamps (Exodus 30:7-8)
 - we must also come into God's presence daily
 - through Bible reading and prayer
 - the cry (preaching) is what divides (reveals) the ready from the unready
 - *"Many have a lamp of profession in their hands"* (Matthew Henry)
 - lamps cannot shine without oil
 - *2 Timothy 3:5 – "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"*
 - compare to the cup
 - *Psalm 116:13 – "I will take the cup of salvation"*
 - *Revelation 17:4 – "And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication."*
 - the woman (false religion) had the cup (the form of salvation), but the contents had changed
 - just as the virgins had the lamp but no oil
 - compare to a whited sepulchre

- *Matthew 23:27 – "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."*
 - the Jews took care to have their tombs white-washed each year
 - touching the dead made one unclean
 - tombs were easily identifiable
 - "Those tombs were annually whitewashed to prevent the people from accidentally coming in contact with them as they went up to Jerusalem. This custom is still continued" (*Albert Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*)
 - "whited" – they appeared beautiful
 - "full of dead men's bones" – no life on the inside

- **verse 8** – *"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out."*
 - oil lamps need to have oil added often to keep them burning
 - foolish found they had no oil
 - *Romans 8:9 – "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."*
 - "give us of your oil" – tried to barter, live off of someone else's experience (or faith)
 - the foolish realized their lamps were lacking

- **verse 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."*
 - "Not so" – in italics (not in the original – added for clarity)
 - "Not at all - it will never suffice for us and you" (another translation)
 - not harsh or selfish answer
 - "buy for yourselves"
 - again – cannot live on another's faith
 - "them that sell"
 - who might that be?
 - cannot be purchased with money (Acts 8:20)
 - we are told to buy the truth and sell it not (Proverbs 23:23)
 - who are the "them" who helps ones to be filled with God's Spirit?

- **verse 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."*
 - "went to buy" – markets were open (not the Judgment Day)
 - question to ponder: why they did not buy and get back in time?
 - why were they told to go and buy if they didn't have enough time to buy and get back?
 - "The door's closing is fair because everyone had ample time to prepare for the bridegroom's coming" (*Martin Collins, ccg.org*)
 - did they get distracted or did they delay (procrastinate)?
 - did they actually purchase more oil?
 - if so, would they not have then been ready and able to enter in with the bridegroom?
 - "the marriage procession to music and song was very slow, and that there was a fair chance of overtaking it after the purchase" (*Expositor's Greek Testament*)
 - "door was shut"
 - "It is customary in the East, at great entertainments, to close the doors when all the guests are assembled" (*Pulpit Commentary*).

- Gospel Day – compare to seven days Noah spent in the ark
 - Genesis 7:7 – Noah & his family went into the ark
 - Genesis 7:10 – they were in there for 7 days
 - Genesis 7:16 – *"and the Lord shut him in"*
 - Luke 17:26-27 – *"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."*
 - comparison made between the time before the Flood (days of Noe) and the time before the end of time (days of the Son of man)
 - universal destruction
 - seven days to get into the ark (Noah)
 - seven Gospel days to get into the ark of salvation
 - just as people could not get into the ark in Noah's day (after the door was shut), the 5 foolish virgins could not get into the house in this parable
 - when God shuts the door, no one can open it
 - Revelation 3:7 – *"These things saith he that is holy . . . he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."*
- **verses 11-12** – *"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."*
 - *"other virgins"*
 - some translations say "former virgins"
 - virgins (God's church) in name only
 - Matthew 7:22-23 – *"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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."*
 - 2 Timothy 2:19 – *"The Lord knoweth them that are his"*
- **verse 13** – *"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."*
 - reveals prophetic time setting of this parable – end of time (compare with Laodicea in Revelation)
 - the main point of the parable
 - watch, be ready
 - look again at the questions preceding this parable
 - sign of thy coming
 - sign of the end of the world
 - *"ye know neither the day nor the hour"*
- **Key Points**
 - Watch
 - Be prepared
 - Lost opportunities
 - "For all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been.'"
 - There are some things you cannot borrow



Sources:

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