

Episode #923 Matthew 25 Part 1-Parable of the Virgins

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. Parable of the Ten Virgins. Matthew 25:1-13.

- A. Verse 1. The way the parable of the ten virgins has been dealt with is an example of some of the problems in Christianity: there is far too much preaching, treating passages as grist for a sermon mill rather than truths God sought to teach. There is also far too much seeking for things to frighten men into conformity. It has been used as if it was referring to conditions today, and it is not. The word “then” is important. It is spoken of the days leading up to the Parousia and the consummation of the eon, continuing right on from His answer in chapter 24. This has nothing to do with the dispensation of grace or our course of action at this present time. It has nothing to do with the beginning of the kingdom, or the course of it. It has to do with the close of the kingdom, when many are deceived when false prophets and false christs arise.
1. This deals with the subjects of the kingdom of the heavens. Every government has subjects. By means of a very common figure of speech the subjects of the kingdom are called by the name of the whole, just like the citizens of this country can be called “The United States.” Thus the kingdom’s subjects are likened unto ten virgins.
 2. This reveals the inward causes of the failure of some when the world is tested. This parable applies to the kingdom only at the time specified. It is not applicable now.
 3. “Virgins” are parthenois, meaning virgins, though some have argued against this translation. The Greek temple of prostitutes was called the parthenon, but this just illustrates an all-too-typical hypocrisy in our naming of sins. These would be quite young, for typical marriage age for a woman at the time was the mid-teens. These virgins were probably supposed to be attendants for the bride, though they were not what we might call bridesmaids, but more servant girls. As such they were young, and thus unmarried virgins.
 4. Bullinger suggests this word means torches rather than lamps, and the oil was poured on the torches.
 5. “Meet” is the Greek *apantesis*, going out to meet someone in order to escort him back with you. They were coming from the home that was his destination in order to meet him and accompany him back in his glad procession with his new bride. These were partially to be an honor guard and partially to light his way to his final destination. It was their part in the grand procession
- B. Verse 2. “Wise” was used earlier of the man who heard Christ’s sayings and did them, like one who built his house on the rock. “Foolish” was used of the man who heard Christ’s sayings and did not do them, who was like one who built his house on the sand. The Greek is *moros*, from which we get the term “morons.” Christ twice called the religious leaders this in chapter 23.
- C. Verse 3. The oil stands both for the Holy Spirit, the Giver, and His gifts. The next dispensation is truly the dispensation of the Spirit. It begins when He pours out of His Spirit upon all flesh, and He is the One Who convicts and the One Who acts as

- paraclete all through this. God will invade the earth by His Spirit and take it over by His Spirit. He will set up His government by means of His Spirit. At that time to neglect the Giver and his gifts will be fraught with the very greatest danger.
- D. Verse 4. The “vessel” is a receptacle, pail, or reservoir. Only here and in Matthew 13:48, in the parable of the dragnet, when they gathered the good into vessels. This was obviously a vessel for carrying oil to restart the lamp or torch.
- E. Verse 5. “Delayed” is the same word as we had back in Matthew 24:48 “delaying,” and the Lord is continuing His Matthew 24 discourse right where that chapter left off. “Slumbered” means they fell asleep, became heavy-lidded or drowsy, dropped off. “Slept” is the Greek *katheudo*. This is the word for voluntarily falling asleep, and is never used as a figure for death. In their society, without electric lights, they were much more used to sleeping with the darkness of night, and staying up late was not a normal thing. These virgins take the opportunity to sleep until they are needed. There was no fault in this.
- F. Verse 6. Midnight = literally the middle of the night. The “cry” was a clamor. The bridegroom had the bride with him and was making his procession with her to their new, mutual home, or perhaps to the place of celebration. He was accompanied by many, so there was this clamor. “Coming” is *erchomai*, the typical word for coming. To “meet” is again to meet him and accompany him back to the end of his journey.
- G. Verse 7. “Arose” means they went into action. “Trimmed” could also mean arranged or prepared. Thus Bullinger suggests “all those” refers to all those wise virgins who had oil to prepare their lamps with.
- H. Verse 8. These, not having prepared for themselves, want a handout from the wise who were prepared.
- I. Verse 9. This should not be mistaken for hard-heartedness on the part of these wise girls. Those who have the power of the Holy Spirit receive it in the proper way: by receiving it from God Himself. Unless God gives one the ability to pass it on to others, as the twelve could do, He gives each one sufficient for himself, and asks all others to come to Him to receive their own portion. One cannot get extra Spirit in order to hand it out to others. The Spirit, given away without God’s command, would do no one any good, but both the giver and the receiver would be left without. The Spirit can only be passed on by God’s will. This lesson needed to be learned by Simon the former sorcerer in Acts 8:19-20. These wise virgins are too wise to make Simon’s mistake. They know that they cannot give away what is sufficient for themselves only. The begging of the foolish does not move them, nor should it.
1. “Those who sell” indicates the proper way to get oil, and the way they had gotten it themselves. The proper way is not to beg it off others when you failed to be prepared yourself.
 2. Imagine heading to the marketplace and attempting to buy in the middle of the night! There was no such thing as 24-hour stores in that day. The marketplaces were all outside in the open, and would shut down at sunset. They would have to pound on the oil seller’s door and attempt to entice him to get out of bed and to come out and sell to them. He would be very grumpy, and would probably refuse these silly girls who are trying to buy from him in the middle of the night!

- J. Verse 10. “Ready” is the same word as in Matthew 24:44, “Therefore you also be ready,” which this parable illustrates. When the time has come and gone, the possibility for entrance into the marriage celebration will be over.
- K. Verse 11. “Came” is *erchomai*, from their mission of knocking on the doors of the oil sellers. We are not told if they got any oil, but the fact that there is no mention of it, as well as how foolish the mission was, should tell us the story. They come with their torches still dark and their mission to accompany the bridegroom already over and done. Their mission a failure, their jobs left undone, these come in humiliation too late and beg for entrance.
- L. Verse 12. “Assuredly” is “Amen I say to you,” the Lord’s solemn assertion of truth. One would suspect that the bridegroom would know servant girls who were assigned to play a part in his wedding! Clearly he rejects them for their carelessness and failure. Silly girls might be known for irresponsibility and not planning ahead, yet there is no quarter given them for this fact. These girls would have been well-instructed in what they were to do, and this was just plain carelessness on their part, and showed a lack of dedication to the important role they had been chosen to play. In God’s kingdom, all ought to have learned better than to neglect the things of the Spirit. Those who do show that they are not ready to enter the Lord’s Parousia.
- M. Verse 13. They are warned once again to give due heed and to pay careful attention to this. We would not expect the twelve to fail to be prepared in that day, but the warning is really to all who are living at that time. The disciples, with their God-given wisdom, will heed the warning, and when the time comes will be prepared. All will not be like them, however.

III. Conclusion: The wise virgins were ready, and the foolish were not. They had the Holy Spirit they needed to be prepared for the day of the Lord’s coming. Do we know God through faith in the gospel of His Son? Do we have the Holy Spirit sealing our lives, as do all those who believe? Or are we not ready if the Lord should come to us? Let us all believe, and be ready!