

PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 25:1-13; Psalm 45:1-17

LESSON 224 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 25:1-13

¹ Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.
² And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.
³ They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:
⁴ But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
⁵ While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.
⁶ And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.
⁷ Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.
⁸ And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.
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.
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.
¹¹ Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.
¹² But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.
¹³ Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Psalm 45:1-17

¹ My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Christ's Parabolical Description of the Church on Earth

The members of the group were watchful, to a certain degree, for the Lord's coming, Matthew 25:1;

2 Corinthians 11:2

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.

2 Their true attitude was shown by their preparation, Matthew 25:2-4;

Psalm 119:105

¹⁰⁵ Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

II The Announcement of the Bridegroom's Corning

1 The prepared and the unprepared were waiting together, Matthew 25:5;

Matthew 13:30

³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Song of Songs 5:2

² I sleep, but my heart waketh: *it is* the voice of my beloved that knocketh, *saying*, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, *and* my locks with the drops of the night.

Luke 19:13

¹³ And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

2 An immortal voice brought the message, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," Matthew 25:6, 7;

1 Thessalonians 4:16

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

3 The fearful state of the unprepared, and the assurance in the hearts of the prepared ones, were shown in the request and answer, Matthew 25:8, 9;

John 11:10

¹⁰ But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.

4 A last-minute attempt to secure missing experiences will not necessarily be successful, Matthew 25:9, 10;

Matthew 24:27

²⁷ For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

III The Entrance of the Five Wise Virgins into the Marriage

1 "They that were ready went in . . . and the door was shut," Matthew 25:10;

Matthew 24:44

⁴⁴ Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Revelation 19:7-9

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in

king: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

² Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

³ Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

⁴ And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

⁵ Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee.

⁶ Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.

⁷ Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

⁸ All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

⁹ Kings' daughters *were* among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

¹⁰ Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

¹¹ So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.

¹² And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; *even* the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

¹³ The king's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* of wrought gold.

¹⁴ She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

⁹ And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed *are* they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Hebrews 2:1-3

¹ Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip.

² For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

³ How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard *him*;

Psalm 45:1-17

¹ My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

² Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

³ Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

⁴ And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

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¹³ The king's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* of wrought gold.

¹⁴ She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

¹⁵ With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

¹⁶ Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

¹⁷ I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

2 The unprepared, foolish virgins were refused entrance, Matthew 25:11, 12;

Luke 13:23-30

²³ Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

²⁴ Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

²⁵ When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

²⁶ Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in

¹⁵ With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

¹⁶ Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

¹⁷ I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

²⁷ But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all *ye* workers of iniquity.

²⁸ There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

²⁹ And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

³⁰ And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

3 The final warning gives a key to the interpretation of the parable, Matthew 25:13;

Mark 13:32-37

³² But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

³³ Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

³⁴ *For the Son of man is* as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

³⁵ Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

³⁶ Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

³⁷ And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Luke 12:35-40

³⁵ Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning;

³⁶ And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

³⁷ Blessed *are* those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

³⁸ And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find *them* so, blessed are those servants.

³⁹ And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

⁴⁰ Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Revelation 3:11

¹¹ Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

NOTES:

Parables

Someone has said that a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." There is, usually, one great Scriptural truth taught in a parable, and it is important that we rightly divide the Word of God to receive the correct message that God would have us receive from the parable (**2 Timothy 2:15** ¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth).

We can see, then, that a parable does not necessarily apply in all its details, or even in several of its details. We generally expect a Biblical type to display or portray more completely its details of spiritual application. And for each of these applications we must have the backing of Scripture itself, for "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Peter 1:20). But,

as we have said, we need not expect to find more than one great lesson in a parable. There may be times when we will find many, however. The one thing to bear in mind always, whether considering remote texts, passages of Scripture, parables, or types, is that whatever interpretation we place upon the particular thing under consideration must agree with the whole of Scripture and be thoroughly in line with every Biblical teaching. In this way we will always be sure of retaining the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Neglect

This parable sets forth one great truth that must not be minimized or lost sight of: the great danger and serious consequences of neglect of one's full salvation. There are other things that can be taught from this parable. Many truths are illustrated in it. But the one thing we must always keep in mind is this great warning and admonition against the passive sin of neglect.

There are sins which are passive by nature that are as destructive in their ultimate consequences as those which are deliberately committed with the full consent of the will. The sin of neglect is one of these. We can see from this parable that the consequences of such a sin are terrible to contemplate. The duration of hell's torture will not be shorter because the condemning sin was passive by nature. Eternal banishment from the favor of a God once loved, adored, and faithfully served, will not be less painful or less remorseful because there was no willful or deliberate disobedience or rebellion against the laws of God.

There are several ways in which neglect can take hold upon us. We may neglect to receive because we do not seek for those things which God has to give us. And we may receive those blessings and experiences that He has promised us, and then neglect to retain them. In either case we will stand condemned before God. The foolish virgins were guilty of both these sins of neglect. They neglected to go on into the fullness of the blessing that God had for them, and they also neglected that which they had already received; and, consequently, they lost all that God had given them. Their condemnation was just, and it was final. They lost all, because they failed to walk in all the light of the Gospel that was made manifest to them.

The Prudence of the Wise Virgins

We read that the wise virgins took oil not only in their lamps but also in the vessels with their lamps. By this we see that they availed themselves of every privilege, every opportunity, and every experience that was opened up to them. They treasured that which they had received and would not allow themselves to be without it.

The wise virgins are like these who do not stop short of one experience that God has for them, but who, after receiving the fullness of the blessing, press on to receive and retain the power which the Word of God states will be given "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Godly people know that even though one may have been justified, sanctified wholly, and baptized with the Holy Ghost, he will not be a full overcomer unless he absolutely retains these experiences by keeping the faith — walking in the light as it is manifested to him. Even though a person has had these three great and wonderful experiences in his possession, he can still be lost forever through neglect of his full salvation. The passive sin of neglect can rob one of eternal life and eternal glory.

Since the whole parable deals with those who are, in a

certain sense, watching for the coming of the Lord, we can say that these wise virgins represent the members of the true Church of Christ. They were not as Israel's former mixed multitude, or as the group who failed to go all the way into the Promised Land. They were living up to their privileges in Christ and were seeking constantly for divine favor upon their lives. They did not neglect their salvation or their opportunities for receiving more than was first given to them. They were walking in all the light of the Gospel that was made manifest to them.

In studying about this mystical body, which in other passages of Scripture is called the Bride of Christ, we see that they are full over-comers, for they have made themselves ready (**Revelation 12:11** ¹¹ And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. **Revelation 19:7** ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready). The Psalmist described the glory of the Bridegroom and the eternal privileges of the Bride when he wrote: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. . . . upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." And he proceeded to give once more the call that reaches out to all, that they might separate themselves from all that would hinder and defile them, by saying, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him" (Psalm 45:6, 7, 9-11).

The Imprudence of the Foolish Virgins

Since the great lesson that we have to receive from this parable is the danger of neglecting our salvation — the sin of which the foolish virgins were guilty — this section of our lesson is the one that should consume the most of our time in study.

Here was a group of people who had the same opportunities as the wise and prudent virgins. They had, as we have said, also received a certain measure of the blessings that God had to give them. They all had received some of the great, definite experiences of the plan of salvation. But the Lord testified that He did not know them! They were no longer His! Their names were no longer written in the Lamb's Book of Life!

The fact that they were virgins demonstrates that they had been partakers of a certain measure of God's salvation. The fact that they had a certain amount of oil, to give them light for a while, shows that the Holy Spirit had been with them to a certain degree. But they failed to go on to perfection, to receive all the experiences that were available to them, to walk in all the light that was made manifest to them. They perhaps felt that they had received all and were sealed by the Holy Spirit Himself, since a certain measure of that precious Spirit was with them. And, what is more tragic still, through neglect they had lost that which they once had received of the Spirit of God.

We know that the oil spoken of here represents the Spirit of God. This oil gives us spiritual light. Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees were walking in darkness because they had no light, and therefore they were stumbling and falling. The Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway (**Psalm 119:105** ¹⁰⁵ Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path); but it takes more than just reading the Bible to give us spiritual light. The Spirit of God must be there to enlighten us and lead us into all Truth; therefore the Spirit and the Word go together and agree (**John 16:13** ¹³ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but

whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. **1 John 5:7** ⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.).

The Holy Spirit begins the work in us when He calls us to repentance and reproves us because of our sins (**John 6:44** ⁴⁴ No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. **John 16:7-11** ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. ⁸ And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me; ¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; ¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged). He comes to us, and is with us, when we are justified; and He does the same in a greater degree when we are sanctified. But He comes into us in His fullness when we are baptized with the Holy Ghost (**John 14:17-18** ¹⁷ *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.). One who has been sanctified has more of the light than one who is merely saved; and one who has been baptized with the Holy Spirit knows a fullness of the blessing that the one who is only sanctified does not know.

This is not to be construed that there are degrees of the Holy Spirit. There are degrees in the way He comes in, the way one receives Him, but no degrees in the Spirit Himself. The justified person has received a measure of the Spirit of God, but not to the extent that the one who has entered the fullness of his privileges with God and has received the experiences of sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The foolish virgins had received a measure of the Holy Spirit but had neglected it and had let that oil leak out. Their lamps had gone out, or were going out, indicating that they had had some oil there originally. We are warned to "give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1). Students of the languages in which the Bible was originally written tell us that the full significance of this verse is that we should take "earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them **run out as** leaking vessels." And the Apostle states elsewhere that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans 8:9). The foolish virgins, then, by their neglect in allowing that which they had received to leak out, had lost the favor of their Lord. They were none of His, because His Spirit had departed from them. This careless neglect had, no doubt, been brought on by their still further neglect in not seeking for and receiving the oil in their vessels with their lamps. They had failed to walk in the light that was manifested to them and had failed to retain the light they had already received. For them there was nothing but darkness.

The Midnight Cry

The foolish were told to go and buy oil. This signifies that there is a price to pay for those things which God freely gives us. We cannot purchase God's favor nor obtain His blessings by any merit of our own. Yet there is a price to pay: a surrendering of our will, of our selves, and of our plans to God — an entire and complete consecration to Him — if we would walk in all the light of the Gospel that is manifested unto us.

The ten virgins slept, but their sleep was not that of spiritual

indifference. They were merely occupied with the duties and physical necessities of life. Five of them had gone on to the fullness of God's favor but the others had fallen short of that goal. Apparently they were all expecting and anticipating the coming of their Lord. But it is apparent that the foolish were not sincerely watching for that great event. They perhaps had talked a great deal about the coming of the Lord and, to all outward appearances, had made the necessary preparations for it, because there was light in their lamps at the beginning. But they had neglected their salvation by failing to go on to receive all that God had for them, and their resultant loss was an infinite one, indeed.

Watchfulness for the Lord's coming will, at times, inspire a certain fear in our hearts. We will not actually fear His coming, in itself, but will fear lest we fall short of the qualifications and conditions necessary to make ourselves fully ready for it. We will fear lest we neglect our salvation and be lost eternally because of that subtle, passive sin. Actually, we will love His appearing and will be doing everything necessary to prepare for it.

The Spirit of God is the constant herald of the coming of Christ. It was the voice of the Spirit that first called the ten virgins to preparation and, finally, to arise and meet their Lord. Jesus will come as the flash of lightning, and there will be a shout and blast of the trumpet of God at that time; but that will be simultaneous with His actual appearing and can hardly be said to be this warning cry of the Spirit as given to the sleeping virgins.

We shall soon hear the shout of the archangel and the blast of the trump of God. We shall soon see our Savior as He comes to catch away His waiting Bride — the Church of Christ. This is the time of His preparation and we have already heard the warning cry of the Spirit of God. The ever-faithful Holy Spirit is doing His work in the world, preparing the Church for that glorious event. Let us "watch and be sober.... putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (I Thessalonians 5:6, 8). Let us take care to see that we have the oil in our lamps, and in the vessels with our lamps, and that we have not allowed it to leak out, through neglect, to our ultimate eternal loss.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a parable?
- 2 How are we to interpret Scripture?
- 3 Who is to be our guide into all Truth?
- 4 What was commendable about the attitude of both the wise and foolish virgins?
- 5 In what ways, then, did the foolish virgins fail?
- 6 What examples are given to us in the conduct and attitude of the wise virgins?
- 7 Enumerate the different offices of the Holy Spirit today.
- 8 What is meant by the "price of the Gospel," since we know we cannot purchase our salvation or any part of God's favor?
- 9 How do we know that the foolish virgins were unsuccessful in obtaining the oil they went to buy?
- 10 Quote the last verse of the lesson text.