

THE TEN VIRGINS

The prophetic parable of the ten virgins in Matthew chapter 25 contains extremely serious warnings to anyone who is serious about their call to salvation. This parable is easily understood as a prophecy for the end of the age, because it is set within a group of parables in which the only subject matter discussed is the return of Christ and those who will and will not be allowed to enter the Family and Kingdom of God at that time.

If you are serious about entering the Family and Kingdom of God as an immortal spirit-being you need to pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast, because this information clearly reveals the attitudes and behaviors that are necessary in order to obtain eternal and immortal life and avoid the second death in the Lake of Fire.

Because the fulfillment of this prophetic parable will clearly be in the end of the age when the Sovereign Father's children are anticipating the return of Jesus as King of kings, it seems to be very much a part of the warning message that is given to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation. Therefore, it is important to examine this parable in detail along with other parables concerning the same topic.

Verse 1 tells us that, "At that time, [that is, at the time of the end] the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom".

It is very clear that the ten virgins represent righteous individuals who are the Sovereign Father's earthly children. Because of the warning messages in Revelation 2 and 3 to the seven churches of God, which will exist just before Christ returns, it appears likely that the ten virgins represent all righteous individuals that exist during the end of the age.

This parable indicates that all of these people knew that the banquet would occur very soon and that they were looking forward to the arrival of the bridegroom (who is Jesus Christ at the first resurrection) and participating in the celebration

after his arrival.

The Wise and the Foolish

Verses 2 to 4, tell us that, Five of these virgins were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them. However, the wise ones not only took their lamps, they also took extra oil for their lamps.

In this parable, Jesus immediately separates those who are awaiting his return into two types of individuals: the wise and the foolish. Notice that all the virgins began their wait with full lamps, which seems to indicate that they all had anticipated that they were going to have to wait in the darkness for some time before the bridegroom came to bring them into the wedding banquet. Also notice that the wise anticipated that they might have to wait far into the night before the bridegroom came; therefore, they brought extra oil in order to keep their lights burning as long as necessary.

Because being wise or foolish is clearly associated with the necessity of keeping the lamps burning, we need to understand the symbolism of the lamps:

The Psalmist said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psa.119:105 Para.).

The lamp symbolizes God's instructions contained in the holy scriptures, which should be practice if one desires to have God's guidance in their life.

Verses 2 to 4 are a warning not to be foolish, but make sure to keep one's spiritual lamp lit (that is, make sure you have enough of God's truth to light your spiritual pathway). Because, if one's lamp runs out of oil, one is left in spiritual darkness and will be unable to find one's spiritual way. Jesus considers anyone who lets their light run out of fuel to be foolish and undeserving of entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Verse 5 says that "The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep" (v5).

All of the ten virgins fall asleep. This is very important because it tells us the identity of the ten virgins. When one reads the warning messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, it is clear that only one of the seven churches that will exist in the end of the age does not go to sleep.

Nowhere in the message to the church of Philadelphia, do we find them pictured as being asleep. To the contrary, they are shown as being the zealous elect who are commended for faithfully keeping the truth of God and upholding the name of Jesus. Therefore, it is clear that the parable of the ten virgins is talking about the six churches who are all spiritually asleep just before Christ returns.

What happened during the first age of the church is an example of what we see today among most of God's people. As time went on and Christ did not return to establish his Father's Kingdom on earth, many became apathetic and went to sleep spiritually. History shows us that because of spiritual lethargy the early church disappeared as a united powerful entity. However, throughout the centuries, there have been a few among God's elect who have kept awake while the great majority have been sleeping spiritually.

The Twentieth Century Christian

If this is truly the end of the age, this parable clearly fits the circumstances today among individuals who have been called to salvation among the various congregations of the true God. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of these individuals have thought that Christ's return was very near and would happen before the twenty-first century. When it became apparent that this was not going to happen, most dozed off into spiritual lethargy. In other words, they believed that "The Lord delayed his coming" (Lk.12:45).

Because Christ did not come when they expected, many who had zealously perused a pious life, became apathetic, stopped observing the Passover, the annual festivals, and the Sabbath and reverted to their old lifestyle and abandoned their awesome calling.

Others held on to the basic truth they had learned and they continued to be nominal Christians who stopped growing in grace and knowledge.

In verse 6 the prophecy of the virgins tells us, "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him'" (v6).

This midnight warning will happen very close to Christ's return (perhaps only 3½ to 6 years prior to his return). It is a warning message to a specific group of people on earth who truly know who God is, to awake out of their spiritual slumber and repent of their wrong attitudes and behaviors and pursue their calling to salvation with zeal; because, Jesus Christ is about to return as Conquering King.

If this cry of warning follows the pattern of all the warnings given by God's prophets throughout history, the warning will be loud and clear before severe trials and punishment are administered.

The issue here is a very serious one. It is an issue of salvation or the Lake of Fire. This is not a minor reprimand or chastisement. This is an issue of whether one will respond to the warning, repent, and return to the faith once delivered and return to God the Father and Jesus Christ in a proper attitude. The window of opportunity for true repentance seems very short. It appears likely that there will be little time to get one's spiritual house in order, before the door to one's salvation is shut forever.

All of the Elect Hear the Cry

The prophetic parable of the ten virgins says that, "All the virgins wake up and trim their lamps"

They will all hear the warning message, they will all wake up and realize the seriousness of the situation and begin to prepare to meet Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ will make sure that everyone who has been called by God the Father to salvation and who is spiritually sleeping during the end time will get a wake up call. The question you need to answer today, is, are you being awakened now or will you put forth the time and effort to make sure that you do not go to sleep spiritually.

The Wise and the Foolish

This parable clearly shows that when the midnight cry goes out, there will be a very quick separation made between the wise and the foolish, based on attitude and behavior. This parable also clearly shows that as many as half of those who comprise six of the churches noted in Revelation 2 and 3 will not properly prepare themselves to enter into the Family and Kingdom of God as immortals but will instead be punished with the second death in the Lake of Fire for their lack of zeal and spiritual preparedness.

The Wise

It appears likely that when the midnight cry rings out, the wise who have held on to enough of the basic truths of God will see the seriousness of their situation and respond correctly by repenting of their poor attitude and behavior toward God the Father and Jesus Christ. Although these individuals revitalize their relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, the prophecies of Revelation 2 and 3 indicate that these individuals will experience severe persecution and trials at the hands of the Beast System government and religion because of their previous lack of zeal for their calling.

Continuing in verse 8 and 9;

"The foolish ones said to the wise, Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out. No, they replied, there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourself" (vs.8-9).

These foolish virgins have allowed themselves to become spiritually weak and lethargic. They have not kept the truth of God alive in their hearts through diligent study and meditation on God's word and constant communication with God the Father. They have not done the things that are required in order to keep the light of God burning brightly in their life. They have no reserve of spiritual strength to rely upon in this time of stress. In desperation, they hope that an association with those who are in a better spiritual condition will get them into the Kingdom. These people have

forgotten the admonition by the apostle Paul to the Philippians to "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12).

The five foolish have allowed their calling and their understanding to erode, they have gone so far back into the ways of the world that they cannot make the transition from unrighteousness to righteousness. They have ignored God's truth and ways too long and have become cold toward God. What they have done is reject an opportunity to repent because they have become so self-willed that they have quenched the spirit of God within them and they have, in fact, sentenced themselves to the Lake of Fire:

verse 10

"But while they [the foolish Christians] were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom [Christ] arrived. The virgins who were ready [the wise Christians] went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut" (v10).

When Jesus Christ arrives to gather the Sovereign Father's children and return to heaven with them; It will be too late for anyone who has ignored the Father's call to enter his Family and Kingdom as a first-born son of his new creation. The opportunity for salvation during the gospel age will have come to an end.

Continuing through verse 11:

"Later the others also came. Sir! Sir! they said. Open the door for us! But he replied, I tell you the truth, I don't know you. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour wherein the Son of man comes" (vs.11-13).

This part of the prophecy is clearly a warning that the way of salvation will be shut to those who do not pay attention and do not make a serious effort to prepare themselves to meet Christ when he returns.

Those who are wise will heed the midnight warning cry when they hear it and begin to diligently begin working out their salvation with their Heavenly Father and his Son. Therefore, they will become worthy to participate in the first resurrection and

partake of the heavenly banquet with Jesus.

The door being shut implies that the other virgins are excluded from the Kingdom of God and are no longer considered righteous individuals. Once the Sovereign Father's holy nation of ambassadors, kings, and priests are gathered from the earth, there will no longer be a person alive on earth with the spirit of God within them. This is why Jesus says to the foolish virgins, "I do not know you." These no longer have the spirit of God available to them, they have lost their opportunity for salvation, which means that their fate is the second death in the Lake of Fire, because they were called of God but they did not remain faithful.

The sad truth is that, if one allows themselves to get into the condition pictured by the five foolish virgins, there is no hope of salvation. In other words, one needs to take positive action today, because when the midnight cry goes out, it is too late to start over again. Today, may be your opportunity to repent and return to God's truth and to reestablish your relationship with both God the Father and Jesus Christ. Tomorrow may be too late.

SIMILAR PARABLES

There are many prophetic parables similar to the parable of the ten virgins in which Jesus puts forth the same dire warning message to the Sovereign Father's earthly children during the time just before his return. Because of the seriousness of this subject we will explore some of these other parables as well in order to show that it is far better to heed the warning now, accept the truth contained in these parables, repent of wrong attitudes and behaviors, and start to grow in grace and knowledge while there is still time.

READINESS AND WATCHFULNESS

Luke chapter 12, verses 35 to 40 seem to be a part of the parable of the ten virgins that was recorded by Matthew. And seems to be in the context of the customary Jewish wedding. When after having a supper with his friends, the groom went to the house of the bride to claim her. Because the return procession took place late at night, the groom

expected his servants to be dressed for work and to have their lamps lit.

Jesus said, "Be dressed ready and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.

Jesus indicates that a person should always be ready to respond quickly to God's truth. One must have their lamp lit when Jesus knocks at the door of one's heart. When one understands that this prophetic parable speaks of being ready to participate in the first resurrection and the attending celebration, and that the ancient Jewish custom extended the marriage celebration over several days (and a whole week in the case of a virgin), and the celebration sometimes went far into the night, it becomes apparent what Jesus is saying by using the analogy of a wedding and its attending celebration.

Just as with any invitation to a wedding banquet, not all of the guests receive the invitation at the same time. This is the situation of those who have been called to salvation during the gospel age. However, when a wedding and its attending banquet is finished, it is finished, and those who do not get there in time will not have another opportunity to participate.

In this prophetic parable we see that the invited guests (the elect of God) should be ready to participate in the first resurrection and its attending celebration. We also see the bridegroom (Jesus Christ) actively encouraging those who have been invited to come and participate in the banquet.

At the end of his warning messages to the seven churches Jesus said:

"Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and I will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcomes I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev.3:20-21 Para.).

The key to securing salvation is to immediately respond in a positive manner when one comes to the

understanding that one is out of alignment with God's word and is in need of repentance and forgiveness. This is exactly what the wise virgins do when they are awakened from their spiritual slumber; they hear the warning and immediately refill their lamps (they make sure that the light of God's word will continue to light their pathway). The filling of the lamps also indicates that a wise Christian will use the light they have to grow in grace and knowledge, whereas the foolish will not.

Blessings Come From Watching

Jesus said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he comes shall find watching He will have them sit down and eat as he serves them" (Lk.12:37 Para.).

Active watching involves responsiveness, faithfulness and effort. Why is a Christian blessed for watching? The reason is that if one actively watches (i.e., attends to the business of growing spiritually) one will be blessed with all of the things that are promised to those who participate in the first resurrection. Verse 37 of chapter 12, is also a clear reference to the righteous being given rewards in the Family and Kingdom of God by Jesus Christ after the first resurrection and the wedding supper of the Lamb.

Continuing in Luke chapter 12 verse 38:

"If he [speaking of Jesus Christ] comes in the second watch or the third watch [delays his coming] and still finds them watching, blessed are those servants" (Lk.12:38 Para.).

This blessing applies to spiritually wise individuals who are among the churches described in Revelation chapter 2 and chapter 3. Even though Christ's return appears to be delayed to the second or third watch, the spiritually wise are paying attention to their awesome calling and are fulfilling their responsibilities as a child of God.

Because the five virgins who went to sleep had a reserve of oil to keep their lamps burning, they are also considered wise and are also blessed.

Be Ready

Jesus warns in verse 40, "Be therefore, ready, for the Son of man [Jesus Christ] comes in an hour when you are not expecting him" (v40 Para.).

One must be consistent in one's faithfulness and dedication to the Father and Jesus Christ, because none of us knows the hour when Jesus Christ will come. And we are each but a breath away from death. And when we die, our fate is sealed. If we have been faithful to the very end of our life, we will be in the first resurrection and will be rewarded accordingly. However, if we have been unfaithful in our walk with God, we will be punished for our wickedness in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death from which there is not return.

The point is, that it is necessary for anyone who is called to salvation to be ready, consistent, and faithful at all times. Remember, it is the person who overcomes to the end that shall be saved. Whenever that end comes for us, whether we die tomorrow, are martyred for our belief in Father and his Son, or live until the return of Jesus, it is the consistent overcomer who secures eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

THE FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL STEWARDS

Luke 12:42-48 Paraphrased

In Luke chapter 12, verses 35-40, Jesus speaks about being a watchful servant, the context of the parable of the faithful and unfaithful stewards is also set in the time of the end of the age just before Christ returns at the first resurrection.

Jesus says, "Who is that faithful and wise steward [a servant of God] whom his Lord [Jesus Christ] shall make ruler over his household? . . . Blessed is that servant who his Lord [Jesus Christ] when he comes shall find so doing. The Lord [Jesus Christ] shall make him [the elect] ruler over all he has" (vs.42-44).

Here, Jesus gives the keys to understanding what is required in order to be one of those who are blessed at his coming. The keys that will help to secure one's place in the first resurrection are faithfulness, wisdom, and perseverance in one's walk with God.

A Warning

Continuing in verse 45:

"But if the servant says in his heart, the Lord delays his coming [which all ten of the virgins did] and they begin to beat their fellow servants, and they eat and drink and get drunk. The Lord will come in the day when he is not looking for him, . . . and the Lord will cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (vs.45-46).

A person who becomes lazy in his walk with God, goes back into the world, or becomes abusive to others within the body of the elect will be cut off from God. This happened during the first age of the church and even some of those in leadership roles fell prey to this kind of attitude and behavior and began to abuse their brothers and sisters in Christ and to eat and drink with the drunkards. This is sinful conduct that is associated with going back into the ways of the world. It is sad, but true, that this type of sinful behavior can easily be found among the elect of God today.

Being cut asunder and being seen as an unbeliever alludes to the punishment in the Day of The Lord, when Christ will punish the unbelievers with severe trials of correction, which will often result in their death:

Continuing in verse 47:

"That servant who knew his lord's will, and did not prepare, neither did his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But if he did not know, and did things worthy of stripes he shall be beaten with few. For to whom much is given much is required. . ." (vs.47-48).

The context of verses 47 and 48 concerns the difference between knowing and not knowing what one's responsibilities are before God the Father and

Jesus Christ.

Those who know what the will of God is for their lives and do not faithfully practice what they know to do will be severely punished by Jesus Christ. However, those who are ignorant of what is required will receive a lighter punishment because they have not set their will against God. Nevertheless, the ignorant servant does not receive a lighter punishment because he is guiltless of sin, but because he is not guilty of blatant and willful sin. Instead, he is guilty of being lazy and faithless in pursuit of the will of God in his life.

The point in verses 47-48 is that as a called-out-one, the more a person knows about the will of God for their life, the greater the requirement is to do the will of God in a righteous and diligent manner before the Father and Jesus Christ. Whether people have a great or a small amount of spiritual knowledge, they are expected to diligently pursue the Father's will in their lives.

Things Which Cannot be Borrowed

Concerning the parable of the faithful and unfaithful stewards in Luke chapter 12, verses 35-48, William Barclay states that a Christian must live their life as if Christ is coming at any moment, and that a Christian must never feel that there is plenty of time to start being a Christian:

Barclay stated:

"No man can tell the day or hour when eternity will invade time and the summons will come. We would like him to find us with our work completed. If we really know what Christianity means we will know that there is no part of life when the master is away. We are working and living forever in our great task master's eyes. There is nothing so fatal as to feel that we have plenty of time.

The parable has two universal meanings, it warns us that there are certain things which cannot be obtained at the last minute. It is far too late for a student to be preparing when the day of the examination is come. It is too late for a man to acquire a skill or character if he does not already

possess it. It warns us there are certain things which cannot be borrowed. A man cannot borrow a relationship with God, he must possess it for himself. We cannot always be living on a spiritual capital which others have amassed" (The Daily Bible Study Series).

William Barclay's comments can easily be applied to the condition in which many people find themselves today. Many people think that they have spiritual capital that they do not have. Many others think that their association with those who seem to be righteous assures them of being in right-standing with God. However, they do not realize that they are bankrupt and are only playing church as are the five foolish virgins of the parable of the ten virgins.

The wise virgins wake up when they hear the midnight warning cry and quickly fill their lamps (the truth of God) with their reserve oil (they repent and begin to earnestly seek God). But the foolish virgins only bring with them what is in their lamp (i.e., their initial understanding of God's truth). They have not grown enough spiritually to have any reserve oil with which to keep their lamps burning. When the foolish virgins realize that Christ is about to come, they seek to make themselves ready by attempting to borrow from the five who had brought enough oil. Because they are foolish, they think that they can get into the Kingdom of God through the effort of someone else. The implication is that these people have a wrong attitude and want to do things their own way, instead of seeking God's ways in a repentant attitude.

In Matthew chapter 22, there is another prophetic wedding parable. In this parable Jesus said:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come, . . . and insulted and killed the messengers" (vs.1-3, 6).

This parable was primarily aimed at the Jews of Jesus' day. But there is no doubt that it also applies to the end of the age when the Sovereign Father will send an invitation to participate in the first resurrection and the wedding feast of his Son

through his ambassadors who live on earth during the gospel age of salvation. Other prophecies speak of torture, martyrdom, and murder of some for delivering the Father's invitation of salvation to mankind.

Continuing in verse 8 of Matthew 22:

"Then he said to his servants, The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find" (vs.8-9).

Those invited early during the gospel age of salvation were the rebellious Jews of Jesus' day. The lesson in this verse is that if the Sovereign Father invites you to his banquet for his son. You had better come or you will be replaced.

Continuing in verse 11:

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend', he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless" (vs.11-12).

This scripture is an extremely important warning for all who have been called to participate in the first resurrection to be spiritually prepared for the return of Christ.

During the time of Christ, when a person was invited to a prestigious wedding banquet and did not have fine enough clothing to attend, the person to be honored would provide the fine clothing. This is exactly what is done for those who are invited to participate in the first resurrection and the banquet that follows.

God the Father removes our sinful clothing (Isa.64:6) and provides us with clothing of righteousness through the sacrifice of Christ (Rev.3:5; 7:9-14), after which, it is our responsibility to maintain this clothing of righteousness in a pure and sinless condition until we are allowed to enter the wedding banquet of Christ.

The man who tried to attend the wedding without proper clothing is symbolic of many who are called to salvation and are very excited at the prospect of being saved from eternal death and being given eternal and immortal life in the Kingdom of God.

However, after accepting the invitation, they do not prepare themselves through continued spiritual growth in grace and knowledge to be worthy to enter the Family and Kingdom of God. Because they have done very little with the opportunity that they have been given, they will have no excuse when Christ tells them that they have disqualified themselves to receive eternal life:

Continuing in verse 13:

"Then the king told the attendants, Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen" (vs.13-14).

Many people have the attitude that they can enter the Family and Kingdom of God under their own terms and conditions and they disregard the clear instructions that are set forth in the Bible. These individuals try to get into the wedding banquet without meeting the standards for righteous attitudes and behaviors that must be maintained throughout one's life.

God the Father has invited many individuals to the awesome calling of the first resurrection, but very few will ultimately be found worthy to participate in it. Because most people reject his rule in their lives and are unwilling to put forth the time and effort to secure salvation.

There is much more information contained in these and other prophetic parables. But I see that my time is up.

If you want to know what the Bible actually says about the end of the age and the awesome opportunities and rewards for those who pay attention to the prophetic messages that are given to those individuals who truly follow God's instructions. or if want more information about the

other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast.

Write to me at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org.

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