

Prophecy Sermon #9

MCBC
Hutchinson, KS
August 15, 2004

Matt. 25:1 – We find ourselves in the Olivet Discourse – Jesus preaching on future events - Prophecy

We are at the end of the Tribulation period before the millennial Kingdom – that is Christ's 1,000 year rule on this earth.

We are at the place where Jesus separates the believers from the unbelievers, beginning with the Jews and then the Gentiles.

These two parables deal with the Jews and then Jesus focuses in on the Gentiles in verse 31.

Our series is entitled – The Son of Man is Coming- Part 4

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Matthew 25:1-13

Let us pray

You may be seated.

The Son of Man is coming

The parable of the ten virgins is a masterpiece. Let me remind us all of some of the characteristics of a parable:

A parable has one central truth.

Every small facet of the story does not carry a mystical meaning. Nor does every part of the parable have application.

In Chapter 25 we have 2 parables – the parable of the virgins and the parable of the servants.

The parable of the virgins is about waiting. The parable of the servants is about working.

These parables come across as warning parables. The exact time of His second coming will not be known in advance. The general time will be known by those who heed the birth pain signs He has given. But the precise time of His personal appearing in power and great glory (24:30) will not be known in advance.

The parable of the ten virgins is given to accentuate the incalculable importance of being spiritually prepared to meet Christ when He returns to earth, because after He appears, now listen and don't miss this: unbelievers who are then alive will have no further chance for salvation.

The setting for this parable was a typical Jewish wedding ceremony in Israel . . . a wedding was the most celebrated social event.

Virtually everyone in a village would be involved as a participant or as a guest. It was a time of great happiness and festivity.

A Jewish marriage consisted of three parts, the first of which was the engagement. Most often arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom—as of right now, my 3 girls are convinced of this procedure!

The engagement amounted to a contract of marriage in which the couple had little, if any, direct involvement.

The second stage was the betrothal, the marriage ceremony at which the bride and groom exchanged vows in the presence of family and friends.

At this point the couple was considered married. If the husband happened to die during the betrothal, the bride was considered a widow, although the marriage had not been physically consummated and the two had never lived together.

The betrothal could last for many months, sometimes a year. During which time the groom would establish himself in a business, trade, or farming and would make provision for a place for the couple to live—that's the "leaving father and mother – cleaving unto his wife" principle of Genesis.

At the end of the betrothal period the wedding feast would be held, and it was in the feast and its related celebrations that the entire community became involved. This festivity, which could last a week, began with the groom's coming with his groomsmen to the bride's house. Together the bride and groom and their attendants would then parade through the streets proclaiming that the wedding feast was about to begin.

The procession was generally begun at night, and torches were used by the wedding party to light their way and to attract attention.

At the end of the feast period, the marriage would be consummated and the couple would henceforth live together in their new home.

It was that third part of the marriage rite that Jesus used as the framework for His parable.

As the parable unfolds, Jesus focuses first on the bridesmaids, then on the bridegroom, and finally on the warning that the parable is given to reinforce.

The world was not ready to accept Christ when He came to earth the first time, although His coming had been clearly predicted by the Old Testament prophets. The Messiah was to have a forerunner who would be a voice crying in the wilderness, and John the Baptist was that forerunner. He was to be born in Bethlehem, the son of a virgin, and in the line of David.

Nevertheless, “He came to His own, and His own received Him not.”

Preparation for His second coming will be more decisive because those who rejected Him during His First Coming have had continued opportunity to be saved as long as they were alive.

But there will be no such continued opportunity when Jesus comes again. When He appears then, the opportunity for salvation and citizenship in the kingdom of heaven will be past. So His teaching this parable carries a very solemn and sobering message.

Vs. 1a

“**Then**” refers to the time of Christ’s unexpected appearing in power and glory . . . spiritual readiness for entrance into the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to the preparedness of a certain ten virgins who served as bridesmaids at a wedding.

As with all of Jesus’ parables, the message of this one is simple.

It is meant to illustrate truths He has been teaching: that He is coming again, that He will then judge sinners and reward the righteous, that people must be ready, and that His coming will be unexpected.

The central truth is that once He has arrived, there will be no second chance and the opportunity for salvation will be gone forever.

Vs. 1b

There may be significance in the fact that there were ten virgins, because Jews considered ten to be a number representing completion. According to Josephus, a minimum of ten men were required to celebrate the Passover. The same number was required to establish a synagogue and to give an official wedding blessing.

Vs. 1c

The attendants were virgins because it was the custom of that day that bridesmaids be chaste young women who had never been married.

Lest we forget, every single man or woman should be a virgin. Hebrews 13:4, “Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” But you say, “Pastor, I’m living with a man, woman” – leave. Or you may say, “I’ve already lost my virginity” – confess and repent and keep yourself pure until your wedding day.

Vs. 1d

The torches used by wedding attendants consisted of tightly wrapped cloths attached to long poles. In addition to lighting the way for the procession, the torches served to identify members of the wedding party, marking them off as special participants. It was therefore important that each of the bridesmaids have a torch.

Vs. 1e

“**to meet**” was used of the official welcoming of a dignitary. **The bridegroom** is obviously Christ Himself. The **ten virgins** are professed believers in Him, and the torches, symbolize their outward identity with Christ. The torches also represent expectation of His imminent return.

In appearance the ten were indistinguishable. They were all dressed appropriately in wedding garments and all had the required torch to carry in the wedding procession. They had all been invited to the banquet, but they were not truly alike, which is the point

of the parable, because they were not all prepared—five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.

Vs. 2-3

The evidence that some were unprepared was the fact that they took no oil with them. A torch without fuel is obviously worthless, and a profession of faith in Jesus Christ without a saving relationship to Him is infinitely more worthless, because one is left in spiritual darkness.

They needed oil. They needed the saving grace of God. Folks, God has made every effort to see that no one, regardless of social standing, wealth, or character, was excluded.

Five of the bridesmaids were without proper torches. They had a form of godliness but had no spiritual life or power because they did not belong to God.

They were committed to Jesus Christ religiously, intellectually, socially, and no doubt emotionally. But they were not committed to Him in their hearts because their hearts had not been regenerated by His saving grace.

They had the appearance of faith, but it was dead. They were in darkness, not light.

Jesus warns that professed believers are like wheat and tares; some are genuine and some are false.

They were also compared to various kinds of soils, some of which give initial evidence of productivity but only one of which genuinely receives the seed of the gospel and allows it to take root and grow.

It was not a popular message in Jesus' day and is not a popular message today, even in many churches.

No conclusion regarding the number who will be saved can be drawn from the fact that the bridesmaids were divided evenly between the foolish and the prudent. But the proportion suggests, however, that a large part of the professing believers do not belong to God. It existed during Jesus' earthly ministry and it exists now and it will be so at the end of the tribulation time.

The five wise virgins are the believing remnant, the five foolish virgins the unbelieving, who only profess to be looking for Messiah's coming.

Vs. 5

The statement "**the bridegroom was delaying**" reinforces Jesus' teaching that His second coming will be unexpected. It will not be delayed from the divine perspective but from the human.

Because so much time will have elapsed since His first coming, most people will be carrying on business as usual when He appears. That idea is supported by the bridesmaids' becoming drowsy and falling asleep.

There are all kinds of sleep—restful sleep and restless sleep. A person who is right with God has restful sleep. A person who is not living in sin has restless sleep.

Now, the Lord knows them that are His, and them that are not His. The Lord can look down on every group and accurately judge between those who are unbelieving and deceived, and therefore foolish, and those who genuinely believe and are therefore wise. But when He appears in power and glory at His second coming, the difference will be apparent for all to see.

Revelation is coming—Jesus Christ revealing Himself, and the hearts of all men will be revealed by Jesus Christ.

Vs. 6

At midnight most people are typically deep in sleep, and the bridegroom's arrival at that time underscores still again the unexpectedness of Christ's return.

In the same way, people living during the end of the Tribulation will have seen all the signs of His coming and will know that His appearing is imminent. But they will not know the moment of His arrival until they see Him "coming in the clouds of Heaven."

Vs. 7

Trimming the torches probably amounted to cutting off any ragged edges of the cloth and then saturating it with oil to make it ready for lighting. The foolish bridesmaids realized their predicament: they had no oil. Nothing could excuse their failure.

When the Lord appears at the end of the Tribulation, many professed believers will frantically realize their lack of spiritual life. They will not have heeded Paul's advice to the Corinthian church to examine yourselves—whether you are in the faith. (2 Cor. 13:5)

They will be self-deceived, perhaps believing that mere association with the things and the people of Christ has made them a part of Christ's kingdom. We know with certainty that many will be trusting in their good works. (Matt. 7:22-23)

Vs. 8

When the foolish bridesmaids apparently tried to light their dry torches, the fire went out. So they tried to borrow some oil, but was necessary that each buy their own.

Just as one person cannot transfer spiritual life, so those who receive grace cannot impart it.

There is no purgatory; salvation cannot be bought. The buying of oil from the dealers refers simply to securing salvation from its only source.

Vs. 9

Why did the wise women refuse to give their oil to the five who were foolish? Their refusal seems uncharitable. The selfless thing would have been for the wise women to share their oil, even if it meant they themselves would have run out.

But the story is not about charity. Rather, the parable reveals that when Christ returns, each person must stand on his or her own. Your mother's faith will not save you.

Where do you stand? Are you alive in Christ? Are you ready? Lost opportunities cannot be regained.

Vs. 10

The foolish women set out to buy oil, but the bridegroom came, and they were too late. Those who are ready will be taken in and those who are not ready will be shut out.

Do not say, "I will turn to Christ later. I will repent after I enjoy a few more years of sin," or "There is always time for Jesus." You do not know that. II Cor. 6:2 says, "Behold, now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

The tragedy was that there was then no more opportunity after the Bridegroom came. After Jesus comes, you are either in or out.

Vs. 10b

Those with light will be admitted and those without it are excluded. Those with life are received and those without life are rejected.

Vs. 11

When the foolish virgins returned from their unsuccessful search for oil and came saying, "Lord, lord, open to us."

Vs. 12

Those five were sham attendants who had never belonged to the wedding party but had managed to dress and act like true bridesmaids. Now the pretense was over, and their sinful, foolish character was exposed.

It will be a moment of sheer terror when unbelievers face a holy God and realize with absolute certainty that they are eternally lost. That must have been the feeling of the people of Noah's day when they saw the flood waters rise above their heads and knew the door to the ark was unalterably shut.

The two great classes are the converted and the unconverted, the false professors and the real Christians, the hypocrites and the true believers, the foolish builders and the wise builders. They asked in vain for admission, but they will be refused.

They have no sense of sin. They have no love towards Christ. They know nothing of being born again. Repentance, and faith, and grace, and holiness, are mere words and names to them.

True Christians shall alone be found ready at the Second Advent. Washed in the blood of atonement, clothed in Christ's righteousness, renewed by the Spirit, they shall meet their Lord with boldness.

Israel in the Tribulation will know that Jesus' coming is near. Salvation is more than mere profession for it involves regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Those who will merely profess and do not actually possess the Spirit, will be excluded from the feast, that is, the kingdom of God. Those who fail to be ready when the King comes, cannot and will not enter His kingdom.

Vs. 13

The Parable of the 10 Virgins chief point is the difference between the wise and the foolish women.

For the fifth time in the discourse (see 24:36, 42, 44, 50) Jesus called on those who will be alive to be alert, because they will not know the day, nor the hour, of His appearing. They would know its nearness, but the exact day and the exact hour they would not know.

Israel therefore is pictured as 10 virgins who are awaiting the return of the bridegroom.

Invitation

Let us stand for closing invitation.

It is worth seeing the ways in which the women are alike: All had been invited to the banquet.

Each of these women had received an invitation—

But what does it mean to be ready? Charles H. Spurgeon saw it as “an inner change brought about by regeneration or new birth.”

A great change has to be wrought in you, far beyond any power of yours to accomplish.

You must, first of all, be renewed in your nature, or you will not be ready. You must be washed from your sins, or you will not be ready.

You must be justified in Christ’s righteousness, and you must put on His wedding dress, or else you will not be ready. You must be reconciled to God, you must be made like to God, or you will not be ready.

You must have a lamp, and that lamp must be fed with heavenly oil, and it must continue to burn brightly, or else you will not be ready. No child of darkness can go into that place of light, or else you will never be ready to go in with Christ to the marriage, and to be forever with Him.

Are you ready? I do not ask, “Have you responded to a gospel invitation? Have you joined a church? Or do you believe in Jesus’ second coming?”

I ask, “Have you been born again? Have you believed on Jesus as your Savior from sin? Are you living for Jesus now? Are you truly ready, or are you among those who only seem to be prepared?”

ADDITIONAL INFO

The parable of the ten virgins tests the genuineness of the faith of Israel; the parable of the talents tests the faithfulness of His servants, and then we have the judgment of the Gentile nations, which tests their right of admission into the Kingdom.

A close analysis of each group will reveal that it can be stripped down to a personal attitude and relationship to Jesus Christ (these Parables are not found elsewhere).

In each case the Lord's return results in an unalterable division between two groups of people.-In each case the people who are lost are utterly surprised at their rejection.

. . . *The judgment on Israel.* The chronology of prophesied events is resumed after the illustrative instructions by the word "then" of Matthew 25:1. In the parable of the ten virgins the Lord is indicating that, following the regathering of Israel (Matt. 24:31), the next event will be the judging of living Israel on the earth to determine who will go into the kingdom.

Readiness for His coming is not evidenced by going apart somewhere to wait idly for Him, but by being about His business with enthusiastic dedication.

In Jesus' parable, He, as King, will return from heaven with His bride, the church, in order to enter into the Millennium. The Jews in the Tribulation will be some of the invited guests privileged to share in the feast.

Extra Section

Boice

Pages 523-530

The return of the Lord is sudden and unexpected. The cry, "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him" (vs.6) comes at midnight, when the women are asleep. In the story of the talents, the master returns "after a long time" (vs.19) when he is least expected. The women who are shut out of the banquet can hardly believe that the door has been closed to them.

Broadus

Pages 498-502

Not found elsewhere. Injunction to 'watch'...thus link all the discourse up to this point in the closet connection.

Then at the time of the Savior's coming . . . often proceeded by musicians. In the utterly dark street every one who goes forth at night is expected to carry a light. In processions, such a lamp was borne on a wooden pole and was doubtless protected from the wind, probably (as now) by a covering of wood, or of cloth supported by a wire frame. These lamps held but little oil, and would need to be replenished. **Tarried** is the same word as in 24:45. **Slumbered and slept** is lit., nodded and were sleeping. The whole tone of the story, and all that we know of the wedding customs, implies that a burning light was necessary . . . could not have been distinguished at the door from strangers . . . **The door** was usually in the middle of one side of a house, leading by a passage under the second story to the inner court, upon which all the rooms of the house opened. When this outer door was shut, all connection with the outside world was cut off. Persistent knocking, and loud entreaty addressed to the bridegroom personally, might at length bring him to the door. **Verily I say unto you**, a solemn assurance. **I know you not**, he does not recognize them . . . that the only way to be ready when Jesus comes is to be ready always . . . The hurried and fruitless attempt, when the moment arrives, to make the preparation which ought to have been made in advance, is deeply pathetic, and touches a sadly common fault in regard to readiness for meeting Christ at his coming . . . "Watch" . . . be so heedfully expectant as not to be caught unprepared. – 1) The coming of our Lord ought to be thought of as a joyful event. 2) The time of His coming is uncertain and may be delayed, so that preparation for it must be permanent. 3) Not all those who call themselves His friends and await His coming, will be found really ready when He comes. 4) Hurried attempts to make ready then, will prove a failure.

But preparation is necessary. In the parable, five of the virgins had made adequate preparation for they possessed the necessary lamps and extra oil in jars (Matt. 25:4). Five others had lamps but no extra oil. At midnight . . . the bridegroom arrived. The lamps of the five virgins without extra oil were going out. So they had to go searching

for oil and missed the arrival of the bridegroom. When they returned and found the wedding feast in progress, they sought admission but were denied (vv. 10-12).

The five virgins represented those who had oil—those who possess saving grace. The servants who invested their talents represent those who exhibit the serving life.