

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise and five of them were foolish . . . But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh”

Matt. 25:1-13.

FOR VIRGINS ONLY

by Craig Marlatt

What is your concept of the kingdom of heaven? I think most Christians would probably agree that the kingdom of heaven is a place where everything is perfect; a place where men and angelic beings will live together in harmony and peace with God; where there is no sickness, or sorrow, or death, no pain or trouble, just the joy of the Lord filling our heavenly home. The place where Christians go when they die.

But does our concept agree with the biblical description of the kingdom? If we look closely at this ‘Parable of Ten Virgins’ we can see clearly another picture altogether being presented by our Lord Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven is not some ethereal realm that exists for us only after we die. The kingdom of heaven is now!

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins . . .and five of them were wise and five were foolish.” Certainly this cannot be speaking about a future kingdom only which some would designate to the afterlife, for in that kingdom “. . . the foolish shall not stand in his sight” (Psalm 5:5). Yet “five were wise and five were foolish.”

To properly understand this parable we must first identify the two categories of people our Lord was speaking about: wise and foolish virgins.

1. The wise virgins are true Christians, who have been born again by God’s Holy Spirit, and seek to do God’s will.
2. The foolish virgins are counterfeit Christians, *“having a form of godliness but [deny] the power thereof”*.

It is interesting to note that both groups are called virgins. There is nothing more deceiving than self-righteous morality. The kingdom of heaven is appealing to moral people who have not been born again. There are many that go to church because they may not want to be identified with those who live in open sinfulness. They see the value of morality and many are even good people in comparison to others around them. In many ways they are virgins, but they have no oil in their lamps. Their righteousness is in the lamp itself and not the oil that is within. They do not steal, lie, or commit adultery, and they fully expect to stand before God’s throne because they have lived lives of moral decency. They believe in the Ten Commandments and try to keep them as much as they can. But the scripture is bold in proclaiming, *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight”* (Romans 3:20).

No flesh! Not evil flesh, nor good flesh. No flesh! We must stand by faith alone.

Faith in the blood of Jesus Christ, Gods Son, “. . . and be found in him, not having [our] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9).

What separated the wise virgins from the foolish ones was the oil: the oil of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit coming into a person that regenerates and causes one to be born again. Nothing less than this can produce a Christian. It is not a conversion from bad deeds to good deeds, but rather from in-dwelling sin to in-dwelling righteousness. “*Christ in you the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27). You may have been baptized, confirmed and dedicated, but if these outer deeds do not confirm an inner reality, there is no life. You are yet in your sins! You are a foolish virgin.

Many people desire lamps but take no oil with them. Why is this? Because the oil is that which leads us into the path of righteousness. It is the oil which takes us to the cross of Christ and causes us to see our need for a personal Saviour (John 3:3). It is the oil that calls us to repentance and causes us to turn to God for healing for our souls (Romans 2:4). It is the oil that causes us to live daily as “. . . witnesses unto [Him]” (Acts 1:8), the oil that will lead us in the path of truth (John 16:13), and it is the oil that will raise our vile bodies from the grave and usher us into the presence of God (Romans 8:11). There is no glory in the lamp alone. Only when it is filled with oil can it be lit so that the light can shine forth. Be a wise virgin today. Examine yourself to be sure that there is oil within your lamp.

“*While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him*”. Jesus gave us many warnings that He would return when we least expect it. He did not tell us the day or the hour, but rather simply commanded us to watch. He did this to prove his people, because He knows the sinful heart of man. If Jesus told us that He would be returning on the 5th of June, many would slumber and sleep until the 4th, then we would try to find sufficient oil for our journey. This is what the foolish virgins did.

“*Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*” This word trimmed means to make an adjustment. For the foolish virgins there was a desperate struggle to put things in order because they had for so long procrastinated and now, suddenly, the time was here. But for the wise it was merely a time for a simple adjustment to prepare for the journey home. The wise virgins were prepared and for them it was just a matter of going forth to meet their master, the bridegroom.

“*And the foolish said, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered saying, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you*”. In that day there will be many foolish virgins trying to borrow oil for their journey but it will be too late. The days of invitation will be over. Those virgins with oil in their lamps will not be sharing, for the time of sharing will be over. They will want to make sure that they have enough for their own journey.

What about you? Do you have oil in your lamp? Are you sure? Get right with God now while there is time. Don't wait until midnight and the sound of the trumpet. Don't wait like those to whom the wise virgins said, “*But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy the bridegroom came*”.

How sad it is to know that there are many who will seek to buy the oil of the Holy Spirit, and how horrifying that there are indeed many who sell phony oil. There are those who sell the oil of penance, which can be bought for money and promises that

which cannot be bought but is a free gift of God (Ephesians 2:8,9). Others sell the oil of religiosity, which speaks of a 'higher power' but it is only a snare. Something to soothe the guilty conscience, but it cannot deliver one from the wrath of God to be poured out upon those "*who hold the truth in unrighteousness*" (Romans 1:18) . Still others sell the oil of spirituality, and desire to have power over others and influence in spiritual matters, but like Simon the magician they have "*neither part, nor lot . . .*" in the kingdom of God (Acts 8:5-22).

The foolish virgins wanted the oil but they were not willing to get it on the Lord's terms, therefore, in their desperation, they were forced to seek oil in the marketplace of the world. But there is no true oil to be found there. That which is sold in the marketplace has no real power to guide you through the valley of the shadow of death.

"And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut." We must be ready if we are to go in with Him. Are you ready? Can you say with full assurance that you have trusted in the Savior and He has filled your cup of peace to overflowing? If not, pray now and He will forgive you. He will fill you with sufficient oil to make the journey home and bring you in to the marriage supper with Him.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." How foolish they were to think that He who searches the hearts of men could not see through their last minute religion. To suppose that He had made a mistake and had shut the door by accident. Yet still they cried, "Lord, Lord, let us in". They wanted Him to hear their cries but they refused to hear his voice saying, 'I'm coming soon, make straight the way of the Lord.' They did not seek his righteousness in life but now, at the end, they were seeking to find his favor. How typical of counterfeit Christians; they want to live for themselves, but seek to die with the Lord.

"But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Do you know Him, whom to know a'right is life eternal? Are you seeking to know Him in your daily life that He might reign over your affairs? That He might have pleasure in your life? If you are then you are a wise virgin, and when the trumpet blows you will need only to trim your lamp, for there will be plenty of oil within, for He is faithful in whom you are trusting. But if you do not know Him in your life, He will not know you when you seek to find entrance at the door.

It is a serious time! The kingdom of God is at hand. Prepare yourself to meet the bridegroom. "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*" (II Corinthians 13:5). Ask yourself this question: Am I a true Christian or just a virgin? Are you a new creature? "*If any man is in Christ he is a new creature*" (II Cor. 5:17). We can know whether or not we indeed possess life eternal. These things are written "*that ye may know that ye have eternal life*" (I John 5:13).

His grace is available today for all those who would seek Him with their whole heart, and He will make them righteous with the true righteousness which comes only from above. That which comes from Jesus Christ alone. The oil of God's Spirit that is able to make us wise virgins.