

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. ³ Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

⁶ “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’

¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Introduction

We continue our series in the 5 teaching blocks in Matthew’s Gospel.

We are now in the last section of the last teaching block.

Jesus is teaching His disciples, through parables, about the importance of both being ready for the second coming and being active for Jesus, **while we wait for His return.**

The challenge this month is to **be ready** for the **second coming of Jesus.** Next month the challenge is to **invest your time wisely,** before Jesus returns.

This month we will learn from the parable of the wise and foolish virgins and next month from the parable of the talents.

We have already covered the signs of the second coming of Jesus, and also learnt about the great tribulation period.

Of course these signs will only be relevant to born again Christians.

The rest of the world will blame global warming or some president or world leader for the things that will happen prior to the second coming of Jesus.

Nevertheless, Jesus took time to deal with His second coming and the signs of it in detail. Therefore it will be very relevant to the generations when all of these things happen.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins does need a little introduction.

First of all we need to understand something about **Jewish weddings of that day.**

In Israel at this time, virtually everybody in a village or in a neighbourhood would be involved in a wedding celebration. They would either be a **participant** or they would be invited as a **guest.**

A Jewish marriage consisted of three parts.

1. **The Engagement.** This was arranged by the father of the bride in consultation with the groom. It was a contract that the families of the bride and groom arranged. Sometimes this happened many years before the couple even met.
2. **The second stage was the betrothal.** This was when the bride and groom exchanged vows in the presence of family and friends. At this point the couple were considered legally married. Their relationship could only be broken off through a divorce.
At this point the couple did not live together. The groom would establish himself in a trade and build a house ready for his wife. This could take up to one year.
3. **The third stage was the wedding feast or wedding banquet** as it is sometimes called.
After this celebration, the couple would live together.
The celebration would last about one week and involve the whole village or town. The bride and groom would parade through the streets proclaiming that the wedding feast was about to begin. The procession was usually at night and lamps or torches were used by the wedding party to illuminate the way and attract attention.
At the end of the wedding feast the best man would join the hands of the bride and the groom and consummate the marriage.

Then the couple would leave at the end of the feast and live in their new home together. It was at this final and third stage of the wedding that the context for our parable is provided. The parable can be divided into three sections.

1. **The Bridesmaids (wise and foolish virgins)– v. 1-5.**

We are introduced to ten young ladies who went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of these ladies **were wise** and five of them **were foolish**.

The **wise ladies** realised that it was prudent to take with them some **spare oil** in a container. The foolish ladies just filled up their lamps and went.

As you can see from the pictures, some oil lamps were quite small and basic. You would probably run out of oil in about 3-4 hours.

The text tells us that the ladies all went out on to the streets at night expecting to meet the bridegroom, but he got delayed. Perhaps he was invited into one of the houses for a hot drink? We don't know what time these ladies went out but let us say it was about 8 p.m.

After about 2-3 hours, the young ladies were tired. It was clearly summer, so they laid down somewhere and went to sleep.

I am sure for safety and comfort that they left their lamps burning!

So far what can we make of this parable?

There were **10 virgins in the story**. We all know that a virgin is a woman who has not had sexual intercourse with a man. **Sexual purity was considered essential in those days prior to marriage.**

God is Holy and we can't be in his presence with **unconfessed and unforgiven sin**.

The number 10 was considered by Jewish people to be a number representing **completion**. Ten men were required to **celebrate the Passover**. Ten men were required to establish a **Jewish Synagogue** as a place of worship.

Finally ten people were required to give an **official wedding blessing**.

So Jesus chose the number ten very carefully to establish the importance of the parable. The number **representing completion was the key**.

At the second coming, **Jesus will complete the work that He began** at His first coming.

The work of Jesus continues now, through His disciples, that should be us!

But later Jesus will complete His work, Himself at His second coming, which will involve judgement as we will see next month.

Jesus describes 5 of the virgins to be **foolish** and 5 of them to be **wise**.

The only difference between the virgins was that 5 of them made simple preparations to make sure that they had enough oil to last the whole night.

The other 5 virgins didn't bother, even though oil was cheap and readily available.

The ladies that went to get more oil thought about the future possibility of needing more. They gave a little bit of thought to the situation.

Olive oil was in an abundant supply, so it was not a problem to obtain the oil.

It is a wise person that prepares for the second coming of Jesus. There is an abundance of Bibles, Churches and Gospel literature.

However many do not take the time to read the Bible, attend Gospel preaching Churches, and consider the words of Jesus!

It is a foolish person that makes no preparation for this event.

(2nd coming of Jesus)

The question that we need to ask ourselves is this.

“ What preparations have we made for the second coming of Jesus?”

The most important preparation is **spiritual purity in our lives**.

This can only be done by putting our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

He is the one who has made the provision. He is the one who has taken the punishment for our sins, by dying on a cross.

Jesus is the only person who can make us pure and Holy in God's eyes.

The reason He is the only one, is because He is God, in human form.

This might be difficult for us to understand because Jesus is often described as God's Son.

The Jehovah's Witnesses can't accept it, so they downgrade Jesus to be a mere human created by God.

This is what the Bible says.

John 1: v. 1-5 in the N.L.T.

In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

² He existed in the beginning with God.

³ God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.

⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

1 John 5: v. 20-21 in the N.L.T.

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.

²¹ Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your hearts.

If we haven't put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ for our Salvation yet, then we are like the 5 foolish virgins.

2. The Bridegroom. – v. 6-12.

We are told in v.6-12 that a great cry was heard at midnight. The voice said

" Behold the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him"

All of the ladies woke up from their beauty sleep when they heard the cry, immediately they trimmed their lamps. This was a simple operation of cutting off the burnt wick. The foolish virgins awoke and discovered that their oil was just about to run out. They requested more oil from those who were prepared.

However the wise virgins admonished the foolish ones to go away and buy some themselves.

They didn't want their light to go out, and it was only midnight.

They were prepared for the whole night and needed all the oil that they brought.

The foolish virgins went away to buy some oil.

However, while they were away, the bridegroom came, and the 5 wise virgins went in with him to the wedding feast and the **door was closed shut.**

When the foolish virgins returned they were unable to obtain entry into the wedding feast.

The foolish virgins were too late. It was now impossible to enter the wedding feast!

So what about the application of the second half of the parable?

The first thing we notice is the time. It was **midnight!**

The children of Israel began their journey out of Egypt at midnight.

Exodus 12:29-30 in the N.L.T.

²⁹ And that night at midnight, the LORD struck down all the firstborn sons in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn son of the prisoner in the dungeon. Even the firstborn of their livestock were killed. ³⁰ Pharaoh and all his officials and all the people of Egypt woke up during the night, and loud wailing was heard throughout the land of Egypt. There was not a single house where someone had not died.

Midnight is when most people are asleep.

The significance here is that Jesus Christ will come at a time when He is not expected, and certainly not welcome!

All of the passages connected with the second coming of Jesus tell of **His sudden and unexpected return.**

The second thing we notice is that the wise virgins, could not and would not help the foolish virgins. The foolish virgins had ample opportunity to get their oil from home, but they didn't think about it, or even care enough to think through one night.

The foolish virgins made no preparations.

We live in a time of "**Grace**" when anybody can put their faith and trust in Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

It is a gift from God. You do not earn it and you can't earn it.

It is God's gift for you, but it is a gift that needs to be received.

The only time it can be received is "**Now**". The Bible says, "**Now is the day of Salvation**".

(2 Corinthians 6: v. 1-2 in the N.K.J.)

We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain.

² For He says:

"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.

Today if you are convicted of your sin, then today you need to ask Jesus to forgive you.

You need to give your sin to Jesus. He will take it from you and give you His Holiness. It will not be a burden to be a Christian, it will be a delight.

However be warned, the time will come when the day of "Grace" will end.

Please make preparations for the second coming of Jesus, please make them now before it is too late! In v. 12 we are told that the person on the other side of the wedding banquet door said to the foolish virgins "**I do not know you.**"

To be a Christian is to have a "**Personal Relationship**" with your creator God, through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the ransom price that was paid to set us free from the bondage of sin.

Do you want to be released today, or held captive in your sin?

Matthew 20: v. 28 in the N.L.T.

²⁸ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."

3. The warning – v. 13.

Finally Jesus tells His disciples to "**watch**" because they do not know the day or the hour that He will return!

It is a Japanese tradition when meeting somebody to arrive about 10 minutes early so that you are always on time.

However as we don't know when Jesus will return, we need to be **on time** by trusting Jesus today.

Thirty two years ago I was working as an evangelist with the Faith Mission in a small mining community just outside Edinburg in Scotland.

It was a three week mission. It was my turn that night to lead the service and choose the songs to sing.

For some reason in my mind, I heard the words "**Be in time**" and starting hearing the tune to that song. **I couldn't remember if I had ever heard the words or the song before.**

I felt that maybe it was God's choice, so I chose that song to close the meeting that night.

I announced the hymn and everybody started to sing it.

However one lady was in floods of tears, she couldn't sing that song, because she was crying so much. After the meeting she and her husband invited me to their home for a cup of tea.

They were called Mr& Mrs Scott.

The lady explained to me that when she was a child, her father used to sing her the song, "**Be in time**". She realised for the first time in her life, that she had never trusted Jesus personally to be her Saviour.

I asked her if she wanted to do it that night.

She broke down in tears and asked Jesus to forgive her for her sins.

That night she began her personal relationship with God.

Her husband also prayed to receive Jesus into His heart and His face afterwards was shining with God's glory.

This couple are now in Heaven, because they were just in time.

He was 70 years old and she was 65 years old.

I thought you might like to hear the words of the song, "Be in time."

I have missed out verse 3. It is an old tune but easy to sing!

"Be in time"

Life at best is very brief,
Like the falling of a leaf,
Like the binding of a sheaf,

Be in time!

Fleeting days are telling fast
That the die will soon be cast,
And the fatal line be passed,

Be in time! Be in time! Be in time!

While the voice of Jesus calls you,
Be in time!

If in sin you longer wait,
You may find no open gate,
And your cry be just too late:

Be in time!

Fairest flowers soon decay,
Youth and beauty pass away;
O you have not long to stay,

Be in time!

While God's Spirit bids you come,
Sinner, do not longer roam,
Lest you seal your hopeless doom,

Be in time!

Sinner, heed the warning voice,
Make the Lord your final choice,
Then all heaven will rejoice,

Be in time!

Come from darkness into light;
Come, let Jesus make you right;
Come, receive His life tonight,

Be in time!

Make sure that you are "In Time". Put your faith and trust in Jesus today.

Amen.