**WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE**

**PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS?**

By Walter Guy

Following Jesus’ discourse recorded in Matthew Chapter 24 on the end-times and what things will be like when He returns, Jesus then, in the following chapter, goes on to describe in parables the need for faithfulness and obedience to Him and His Word along with the rewards for doing so. Matthew 25 begins with the parable of the ten virgins.

Matthew 25:1-12 – *“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him! Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ 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.’ 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. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’*

Here we have an illustration using ten virgins waiting for the coming of the expected one and the subsequent celebration following his arrival. This illustration alludes to the church, those Christians who are waiting for the return of Christ and the subsequent celebration referred to as the marriage supper. Note that this illustration is a portrayal of the divine Kingdom coming down from heaven as stated in verse one. The ten virgins are listed as being in two categories: wise and foolish.

These ten virgins illustrate the church which clearly consists of two groups of people – the wise and the foolish. Jesus made a distinction between the wise and foolish Christians at another time when spoke of the rewards for the wise and the consequences for the foolish.

Matthew 7:24-27 – *Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

It is therefore important that we understand the significance of the parable of the ten virgins that Jesus gave us because it is a warning that concerns the end-time church. Jesus illustrates that approximately half of all end-time Christians are not going to enter into the celebration when Jesus returns. WHY? The answer is found in the personal preparation and endurance of the foolish virgins! THEIR LIGHT WENT OUT! So why is it so significant that their light went out?

Matthew 5:14-16 – *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works* (the way you live) *and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Jesus is returning for Christians who truly represent Him, who have His image, character and nature formed in them. He is not coming for Christians or a church that is merely another fraternal or social organization of man – a church in name or form only. Such is a dangerous state of the church or of Christians that the apostle Paul told Timothy about that only had a form of godliness but denied the life changing power that is in Christ.

2 Timothy 3:5 – *having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

(Note: if you read verses 1 through 4 you will see that in the last days that the behavior of the foolish Christians conforms more to the world and sinners than to Christ. Proof that this passage refers to the church is that it is the only place you can find a “form of godliness” because it does not exist elsewhere in the world.)

The key to understanding this illustration of the ten virgins is in the “LIGHT”. Notice that at the time they were alerted of his coming that the foolish ones admitted that their lamps or lights had gone out. Consider also the source of supply to maintain the light was the oil – which they no longer had. Bible scholars agree that oil represents the Holy Spirit. This further shows the foolishness of the five because they had no oil – they had no spiritual resource to draw on! This illustrates that half of Christians in the end-time are not led of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and they are lacking in the Fruit of the Spirit which is the character and nature of Christ and God the Father.

Yet these foolish ones knew about Jesus and his return, they were expecting, and even anxious to meet Him when He comes. However their lives did not reflect that they were truly His as their light was extinguished. This also illustrates those Christians who are so preoccupied with the things of this world that they have neglected the things of the kingdom of God and the Spirit of God. They failed to build up and maintain their spiritual depth to maturity in the Lord and His Word because they were distracted with other things they thought were more important in their lives.

Matthew 13:22 – *Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.*

Luke 21:34-36 – *But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”*

Now let’s consider what the LIGHT does. Light exposes what is in the darkness; darkness refers to evil and sin. Those whose light has gone out are those who continue in sin and try to hide their sins. Such Christians may maintain one appearance on the outside but continue in the works of darkness on the inside. They have other things on their minds and in their hearts than the honor and respect for the Lord.

Matthew – 6:22-23 – *The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

Ephesians 5:11-16 – *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.” See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Romans 13:12 – *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*

These verses describe Christians living a compromised life; trying to live in two realms at the same time –but it doesn’t work. It’s one way or the other and trying to accommodate both at the same time is foolishness.

Matthew 6:24 –*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

Light also provides guidance and shows a clear pathway on how to live, what to do in various situations and circumstances, and also where to draw resources from.

Psalm 119:105 –*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

Light also draws the lost to it. People stumble around in spiritual darkness, but if they desire to escape from that darkness they will be drawn to the light. Of course not all want to escape from the darkness because of their love of living that way; but others are looking for truth, that light to get them out of the mess they are in.

John 3:19-21 –*And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*

But for those that do want better for themselves, the light will show them the way out. Therefore Jesus calls for His followers to be the light of the world and to show to way of truth which is not achieved in those who are in the foolish category. These are the part of the church that Paul addressed in his letter to the Romans due to their worldly behavior.

Romans 13:12-14 – *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

Next consider what the light is and what it represents: it is the knowledge of Him and of the glory of God; His image and likeness formed in the true Christian that can be seen by the world. Note that the *armour of light* is Christ likeness in you.

2 Corinthians 4:6 – *For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

The foolish virgins represent many so-called Christians that have not put everything in their life on the cross of Christ and left it all there.

Luke 9:23 – *Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*

They want the world and the Kingdom both. Some of them even claim to have been in the ministry.

Matthew 7:21-23 – *Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work iniquity!’*

They were never intimate with the Lord, so they never had the real knowing of who and how He really is. Notice the phrase, “I never knew you”; the word *knew* is used of a man *knowing* his wife in the most intimate of relationships. This is how close Christians are to be with Christ; and in so doing they will know what His will is, what He desires from each individual believer and how He wants each of us to live and minister to others.

However, these foolish ones, even though they claimed to be doing work in the ministry were actually more interest in doing things “their way” rather than “His way”. They followed man’s directions and conventions in the work of the ministry rather than waiting on the Lord for His directions. Thus they make their claims in self-justification, yet Jesus rebuffs them saying, “*I never* *knew you*. Then Jesus goes on to say, “Depart from me, you who work iniquity”. Note that *iniquity* means rebellion or more specifically, “d*oing your own thing”*. So we see that the situation is dire for those whose light went out; those who don’t truly and purely represent Him! Look what He told the foolish virgins:

Matthew 25:12 - *But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’*

What an indictment to those who know all about Him, but didn’t really KNOW Him! Jesus even gives us an example of a person who was more interested in doing ministry compared to one who preferred to learn more of Him and from Him.

Luke 10:38-42 *– Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many* (less important) *things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”*

Jesus credited Mary for choosing what was more important and valuable. It is shameful that so many in the ministry have failed to sit at Jesus feet as a true disciple (one under a learning discipline) and, instead, getting their directions from men for their ideas and directions of what to do and how to do it, (as in denominational traditions, methods and dogmas).

Matthew 11:28-30 – *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

God, the Father does not entertain man’s vain attempts to minister and worship; in fact, God’s instructions are to “hear Him” (Jesus), and to do things His way. Even Peter was rebuked by God for his vain attempt at memorializing and event.

Matthew 17:3-5 - *And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* ***Hear Him****!”*

Notice that the foolish virgins were not present when the expected one arrived. They were out trying to buy what they needed to get the light going again. They went shopping! However, what they really needed you just can’t go out and buy; that oil is special and takes time to process and develop. They missed out because they were lacking an essential ingredient for their spiritual lives. It was too late for them to acquire what they needed. As a result they were not allowed into the great celebration. Since this illustration represents the coming of the King and entrance into His Kingdom and the marriage feast that followed – they missed out.

Just belonging to a church does not qualify you to enter the celebration at His coming. You must belong to Him, have His Spirit in you so that the light of His glory shines in and through you.

Jesus is returning for those who believe in His crucifixion for their sins and His resurrection and who truly know Him – the wise whose light continues shine in this dark world right up until He comes. How is your light doing?

Now for the solution of how to avoid being numbered among the foolish: recognize the very first message of the Kingdom is REPENT – which means we must change, not just our behavior, but our entire way of thinking which regulates our way of living.

Matthew 4:17 – *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Romans 12:2 – *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

We also should change what we desire and earnestly seek after; which you can do if you really know and trust in Him.

Matthew 6:33 – *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things* (that you need) *shall be added to you.*

Then the old selfish life with its lusts and desires need to be put to death daily; dying to self-will; subjecting the “I will, I want, and Pride of life” to the cross of Christ. This is illustrated in Jesus own prayer to His Father when He was enduring a trial in the garden:

Luke 22:41-42 *– and He knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”*

Denying your own will and preferring His will to be done is a character trait of the wise – they know from whom all good gifts, guidance, provision and protection comes.

1 John 2:15-16 – *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*

Luke 14:27 – *And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.*

Allow Christ (the light) to be formed in you by becoming a disciple of Christ. Do not become a disciple of man, because that flesh will fail and disappoint you.

Galatians 4:19 – *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*

Colossians 1:27 – *To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Romans 8:29 – *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren*.

Get to know Jesus and the Father intimately. This is done by knowing His Word, the Bible. He reveals Himself in His Word! Then ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth, and who will teach you all things that you need to know. The Holy Spirit reveals and explains the Word of God to you so there are no mysteries to those who are truly Christ’s.

John 14:16-17 & 26 – *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

John 16:13-14 – *However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.*

Notice that the Holy Spirit will glorify Jesus. The Holy Spirit is that oil that fuels the light so it can shine! Having done these basic things you will show yourself wise and will be able to boldly say to Him, *“Even so, come Lord Jesus”,* (Revelation 22:20)*.* So get ready to join in that great celebration as one of the wise ones who trust and obey.