

“Eschatology”
(Part 40: The Olivet Discourse, Part 7)

V. The Olivet Discourse.

G. Warnings to Be Ready, Part 3 (25:1-13).

1. This morning we pick up again the theme of *being ready* for the Lord’s return in the parable of the Ten Virgins.
 - a. Remember that Jesus has been telling His disciples that they needed to be ready for His coming in A. D. 70. He told them that their generation would not die until He came again in judgment.
 - b. When it came, they needed to be ready to run, or they would be trapped in the city and suffer with the rest of the people.
 - c. He then began to finish what He had to say by giving them three parables, each with the same message – Be ready! – but each with a different emphasis.
 - d. But don’t forget that Jesus also had in mind another coming and another judgment in these parables, one that would take place at the last day. This is the one that we also need to be ready for, and that’s why these parables are so important to us.
 - (i) In the parable of The Faithful Slave, we saw the emphasis was on preparing for His return by faithfully discharging the responsibilities He has given us in His kingdom.
 - (ii) Whether we are elders, deacons, husbands, wives, or children, we all have certain duties that Jesus has given us to do.
 - (iii) The best thing we can do to get ready is to be faithful in our responsibilities.
 - (iv) Jesus tells us if we are faithful with the little He gives us, He will reward us with more – He will give us all His possessions: the new heavens and the new earth.
 - (v) But if we are not faithful and abuse our authority – if we show ourselves not to be true Christians – He will cut us off and assign us a place with the hypocrites.
2. We come now to the second parable, the parable of the Ten Virgins.
 - a. Again His message is, Be ready! But His emphasis is that we make sure our lives are in order and that we are constantly waiting and watching for His return. If we do these things, we will be ready.
 - b. Jesus now uses the analogy of a wedding to help us understand how to be prepared. To understand this parable, we need to know at least a bit about how weddings took place in those days.
 - (i) After a couple became engaged and after a period of betrothal which lasted usually no less than a year, then would come the wedding ceremony.
 - (ii) This ceremony would usually take place in the house of the groom’s parents. Sometimes the bride’s relatives would take her to her fiancé’s house, but more often the bridegroom himself would come, followed by a great procession, to bring her to his father’s house – the place where he and his wife would live – for the ceremony and festivities.

- (iii) The problem was no one knew at what time of the day or night he was coming so the bride and her bride's maids would have to be on the alert at all times.
 - (iv) There was another problem: in those days the streets were dark at night, since they didn't have any street lamps, and if it was at this time the bridegroom decided to come, they had to use lamps or torches to light their way to His house.
 - (v) The ten virgins, who were the bride's-maids, waited with the bride for the coming of her bridegroom. There were ten of them most likely because the Jews never held a synagogue, circumcised, kept the Passover, or solemnized a marriage unless there were at least ten present (Matthew Henry; Cf. Ruth 4:2).
 - (vi) When the virgins heard the announcement that the bridegroom was coming, they needed to go out with their lamps to light his way, and then they would follow him back to his father's house with the bride where the wedding ceremony would take place, followed by a great feast.
 - (vii) The lamps were important not only because they needed the light to see their way, but also because no one was allowed to enter the procession or the bridegroom's house and the celebration without a lamp (Wight, *Manners*, 129-133).
3. There are three things I want us to see from this parable. The first is that Jesus is speaking here about the end of the world, when He comes again for His church. The second is that these virgins represent the church. And the third is that some of the members of the church will be ready to go with Him and others won't.
- a. First, we need to be reminded again briefly that Jesus is speaking both about 70 AD and the end of the world.
 - (i) He was coming in judgment in 70 AD, and so they were to be about their Master's work, while waiting and watching for His coming. If they were faithful to do this, not only would they be saved from that judgment, but they would enter into the marriage of the Lamb as part of His bride.
 - (ii) But He was also coming in the future to gather the rest of His church and complete His bride. This is something we need to be ready for at all times, even as the disciples also did in Jesus' day.
 - b. Second, the ten virgins refer to the visible church.
 - (i) We shouldn't let the fact that the church appears here as ten virgins rather than as the bride confuse us.
 - (a) In His parables, Jesus refers to Himself as the Master of the house, the Son of a King, the King Himself, or the Bridegroom.
 - (b) In the same way, the church is also pictured in many different ways – sometimes as a building, sometimes as the body of Christ, sometimes as the bride and sometimes as the bride's attendants, in this case, she appears as the ten virgins.
 - (ii) The church is referred to as a virgin, because the Lord has washed and cleansed her from all her sins by His blood. He has taken away all her uncleanness and impurity by the sacrifice of Himself.

- (a) Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, “For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you *as* a pure virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2).
 - (b) No one is clean apart from Christ. We have all played the harlot by serving other gods, not the least of which, ourselves.
 - (c) But through faith in Christ, all of our sins have been removed, making us pure and holy virgins in His sight.
- (iii) There are two other reasons why these virgins must be the visible church.
- (a) First, they are all waiting for Jesus to return.
 - (b) And second, they are all hoping, when He returns, to go into the marriage feast with Him. Who else could this be but the church?
- c. Third – and this is the main point of the parable – when Jesus comes, not all of His church will be ready.
- (i) All of the virgins thought they were ready. They laid down and slept thinking that they had nothing left to do.
 - (ii) When the bridegroom came, they all got up and began to trim their lamps. But when they did, some of them realized they had forgotten something: They didn’t have any oil for their lamps.
 - (iii) They asked those who were ready for some of theirs, but they had none to spare, and so they went out at midnight hoping to buy some.
 - (iv) When they returned, the wedding party had already gone inside the groom’s house, the door was shut, and the bridegroom was unwilling to open it again. He said to them, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you” (v. 12).
 - (v) This tells us that when Christ returns for His church – whether at the Second Coming or at death – there will be some who are ready, who will go into the marriage feast and enjoy the blessings of heaven forever. But there will also be those in the church who won’t be ready, who won’t have repented and trusted in Jesus, and they will be shut out of the kingdom forever.
 - (vi) It’s possible to be a professing member of the church, a member of Christ’s covenant community, and still be lost.
- d. There’s one thing in our text I would point us to by way of analogy that can summarize the difference between the wise and the foolish: the oil.
- (i) I’m not sure if our Lord intended to give this oil a spiritual meaning in the parable, but let’s consider it spiritually for a moment.
 - (a) Oil, in the Scripture, is often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and it’s interesting that the presence or the absence of the Spirit is the only difference between a true believer and a false one. It may be the Lord chose this illustration to draw our attention to the Spirit.
 - (b) The Spirit is the One who places us in Christ, who puts His life in our souls, who gives us Christ’s record of perfect obedience, who washes our souls from all guilt by the blood of Christ, who changes our hearts so that we will love and obey the Lord, and so that we will love our neighbors. It’s the

Spirit's work that Jesus came into the world to purchase through His life and atoning death, so that the Father could freely give Him to His children.

- (c) If you have the Spirit's saving work in your soul, you have all you need to be ready to meet the Bridegroom. If you do, you will be trusting in Christ, you will be turning from your sins, you will be obeying God's commandments. You won't be doing these things perfectly, but for the most part you will be trying to do so from the heart.
- (ii) On the other hand, there is another work of the Spirit that might lead us to believe we are saved when we're really not: the common work of the Spirit on our consciences.
- (a) There were five virgins in the parable who were shut out of the kingdom of heaven. The Lord said to them, "I do not know you" (v. 12). One day the Lord Jesus will tell many who thought they were Christians, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23).
 - (b) I don't believe the Lord is telling us that exactly half of His church will be saved and the other half won't, but He is saying that a significant part of His visible church – His professing people – will be lost.
 - (c) The important question we need to ask ourselves this morning is, Am I a wise or a foolish virgin? Do I have the saving oil of His Spirit in my soul, or only His work of conviction?
 - (d) These questions should help us know the answer: Do I love God, the true God, the One who has revealed Himself in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Do I love them for more than what they have done for me in Christ? Do I also love them because of who they are, especially because they are holy? Do I love the Law of God, and am I trying to keep it because I want to obey and not sin? Do I love God's people because they are recreated in His image? Am I looking for Christ's return and do I want Him to take me to heaven because I want to be with Him?
 - (e) If you can honestly answer yes to these questions, then you are a wise virgin. You have the oil of God's Spirit in your soul. But if you can't, if you really don't love God, if you really love the things of the world more than God, if you really don't want Jesus to come for you because you want to be with Him, then you still need to be converted.
 - (f) We really have no idea when Jesus is coming again, especially when He is coming for us at our death. If we put this off until He comes, it will be too late. There won't be anyone who can help us then. There haven't been a few who were suddenly faced with death, but then discovered that their spirituality wasn't everything they thought it was. Their hearts were flooded with doubt, and maybe for good reason. When things were going well, they were content with just a little religion. But now that they were about to face their judge, they began to fear that they hadn't been living as they should have in the first place.
 - (g) Now is the time to judge our own hearts and to get ready for the coming of the Lord, for we don't know when He is coming for us.