

CHAPTER 13

Parable of the Ten Virgins

During Jesus' ministry, many people failed to understand His parables, and this holds true even today. The meaning behind the parable of the ten virgins is no exception, and the following is my understanding, as I believe God has revealed it to me.

To begin, I must address a coming event that theologians have named the rapture. This event is what transports the bride to her wedding. There are three schools of thought today concerning the timing of the rapture, or also known as the catching away of the Church. These thoughts or theories are called: pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation. Ordained men of God hold steadfastly to their beliefs in each of these categories, offering supportive Biblical evidence for their stand. If the proponents of these theories are truly anointed of God, as I believe they are, then who is right? I challenge each reader to answer the question after you have studied this chapter.

The Jewish terminology for consummating the marriage is revealed in the following passages:

“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord” (Genesis 4:1, KJV). “And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch” (Genesis 4:17, KJV). “Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves” (Numbers 31:17–18, KJV). “And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not” (1 Kings 1:4, KJV).

I have italicized some words in the above verses for you to keep in mind when they are used again in the parable of the ten virgins. The main point of my discussion in this chapter hinges on the historical meaning of these words. There are more verses throughout the Old and New Testaments that contain the words knew, know, or known as they relate to the physical union between the bride and groom. This act is the binding seal of a covenant relationship and is what transforms a man and woman into a husband and wife. This is the reason why God has commanded that people honor and preserve it for marriage.

The central theme of the parable of the ten virgins is the marriage of a bridegroom. Jesus was using an illustration to explain to His disciples about the coming kingdom of heaven and the relationship He would have with the occupants of this kingdom. The parable of the ten virgins has a dual meaning, for it is not just any groom returning for his bride, but the Son of God—Christ, The Lamb of God, Jesus—returning as the bridegroom for His bride, the church. “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:7, KJV).

The Jewish courtship ritual goes as follows: A Jewish virgin is engaged to a Jewish man, and this marriage is often arranged by their fathers. Following the engagement period is the betrothal. This is when the bride and groom exchange vows. The couple does not live together at this time, nor is the marriage consummated. The virgin will remain with her parents and will prepare herself for the day

when her groom returns. There is no forewarning of the groom's arrival, and the virgin only knows that his return is imminent and can happen any time of the day or night. Meanwhile, the man goes and prepares a house for them as well as establishing himself in a business or some trade. When the groom returns, he will accompany his bride to the wedding feast. At some point during the wedding feast, the groom will take his bride to the chamber to consummate the marriage—or as described in Biblical verbiage, to “know her.”

One last clarification—my explanation does not condone or promote polygamy. The earthly illustration has one bride, and Christ has only one bride, even though “we, who are many, are one body in Christ” (Romans 12:5, ASV).

The parable of the ten virgins:

“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 were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, 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: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 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 wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 25:1–13, KJV).

In this parable, it is imperative to read the verses without predetermined thoughts. If you do, there is a tendency to overlook essential facts. Christ said, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.” Stop here and ask yourself how many of the virgins in this verse will make up that which is called the kingdom of heaven. There will be ten. Why ten? To a Jewish person, the number ten represents completion. The ten virgins signify that the time of the gentiles has ended, and the body of believers is complete. Not “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24, NKJV) can the wedding take place. The kingdom will include the entire church (the ten virgins), and the bride will come from those watching faithfully for Christ's return (the five wise virgins). Now five are foolish and five are wise, but “the kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins.” If five were rejected from being a part of the kingdom of heaven (unbelievers), then it would have been written this way: “The kingdom of heaven will be likened unto five virgins from whom ten were called.” If ten is the number for completion, we have a problem with only five. All ten still make up the kingdom, but only five of them will receive the reward of being the bride.

It is argued that the five foolish virgins are the unbelievers and the five wise virgins are the believers. Part of this reasoning comes from the fact that the bridegroom says to the five foolish virgins, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” How you interpret “I know you not,” will decide in which campsite of thought you pitch your tent. If you accept the modern interpretation of these words, you

will conclude that the groom literally did not know these women and consequently lead you to accept that they are unbelievers. My question would be, "How could the groom not know his fiancé?" If you accept the meaning of the phrase "I know you not" at the time spoken, you just might consider pitching your tent in my campsite of thought.

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out" (Matthew 25:4, KJV). Here is a question to ask before you select your campsite. How many unbelievers do you know whose lamps (light) have gone out? Remember, the five foolish virgins ran out of oil, and oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. I have never heard of an unbeliever's light going out. Could the five foolish virgins represent believers whose lamps have gone out? A more familiar term to describe Christians whose lights are barely a flicker is "backslidden." It happens to God's children, not unbelievers, "and they have forgotten the Lord their God. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (Jeremiah 3:21–22, KJV).

Backslidden believers who have not repented will receive their reward (portion) with the unbelievers: "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Luke 12:46, NKJV). What does that make you if you are going to receive a portion intended for the unbelievers—a believer or an unbeliever? You ask, "What is the unbeliever's portion?" "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12, KJV). Who is being cast out? The five foolish virgins—or, said another way, the children of the kingdom. Nobody has lost his or her salvation. The outer darkness is not hell, but the period called the great tribulation—a predicted time coming soon to earth when God removes the Holy Spirit (the light). This time of trouble will engulf the entire planet: "and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time" (Daniel 12:1, ASV). Nevertheless, the bottom line to the logic that disproves the idea that the five foolish virgins are unbelievers is that the Holy Spirit (oil) does not possess an unredeemed body.

Now look again at the above passage (Matthew 8:12), and you will have the piece of the puzzle that fits with Matthew 22:11–13: "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness.' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In Matthew 8:12, God speaks about the children of the kingdom (the five foolish virgins) being cast out, for they were unworthy. In Matthew 22:11–13, a man was cast out of a wedding for not having on a wedding garment. Can we assume that the man was dressed in everyday clothing? Yes. Spiritually speaking, the difference between a wedding garment and an everyday garment is the daily washing away of sins. Our garment of flesh is kept as white as snow from a daily cleansing and is fit for the wedding feast. However, unconfessed sin (unwashed feet) will soil our garment of flesh, making it unfit for the wedding.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:12, KJV). The groom came to receive his bride

and to attend the wedding feast together as a couple. The door is shut behind them, and no one else can enter as the festivities get underway. At a certain time during the feast, the bridegroom will take his bride to the bridegroom's chamber for the consummation of the marriage—or in Jewish terminology, “to know her.” She enters the engagement period as a virgin, enters the wedding feast as the virgin bride, and becomes the groom's wife in the bridegroom's chambers. Because the five wise virgins were dressed and ready to go (watching and waiting), they were worthy to attend the wedding feast as his brides and later enter the bridegroom's chambers to become wives.

On the other hand, because the five foolish virgins were not dressed and ready to go, they missed the groom's return and became unworthy of becoming brides. The groom said to them, “I know you not”—or another way of saying it, “I will not consummate our relationship, for you are not worthy.”

A Jewish virgin who was not faithfully watching for her groom and living as if she was not espoused to a man is the same as a Christian caught up in the cares of this world and living as if not espoused to Christ:

“And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:34–36, KJV).

Let us see if we can connect a couple more pieces together in this jigsaw puzzle. Who is God talking to when He said, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:34–36, KJV)? From our study of the parable of the ten virgins, who is to watch? The fulfilled number of believers espoused to Christ, when the times of the gentiles have ended. To be accounted worthy indicates that there is a reward available to those who have remained faithful. The reward is not salvation—for that is a gift, not a reward. We learn from the parable that to become the bride, the virgins must be found dressed in their wedding gowns, with lamps brightly shining.

Also, in Luke 24:34–36, we read about escaping things that are “to come to pass” on earth. This is obviously not referencing hell, but the seven years of tribulation. When the door is shut (times of the gentiles), the Holy Spirit will be removed, and darkness will prevail upon this earth for seven years. Where are the five foolish virgins? Cast out into darkness, where there will be many tears and the pain will cause the people to clench their teeth. Does this sound familiar? The five foolish are still a part of the kingdom but will be among those called the tribulation saints. The kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins. For further validation, we need to bring other areas of understanding to help connect the pieces.

In the physical world, what does God say about marriage and an unfaithful spouse? What does He say about one who becomes unfaithful during the engagement period? You can know how Jesus felt about marriage when He addressed the Pharisees concerning divorce. The Pharisees asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” Jesus answered:

“What did Moses command you? They said, ‘Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate’” (Mark 10:2–9, ESV).

To Jesus, marriage was sacred—but when it came to unfaithfulness, He said this: “But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality” (Matthew 5:32, NKJV). Jesus is saying that marriage is a sacred and holy institution designed by God for a man and woman to become one flesh. There was only one exception for a divorce—unfaithfulness.

In the spiritual realm, you also see consequences for unfaithfulness. Look at what Jehovah did with His wife, Israel: “Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce” (Jeremiah 3:8, NKJV). The act of being unfaithful in the spiritual world is when one has taken their eyes off God and directed their attention to a harlot called the world. The world is very seductive and has laid claim to many victims. There are consequences for unfaithfulness in the physical as well as the spiritual world. To say that the entire body of believers—past, present, and future—will be the bride of Christ regardless of their unfaithfulness seems a contradiction to Biblical and symbolic understanding. The bridegroom expects His bride to be faithfully watching for His return. Jesus said, “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” (Luke 21:36, KJV). Let me stress again that the entire body of believers (the saved—those who are born again and washed in the blood) will be included in the kingdom of heaven. However, the bride of Christ is for those who “have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, KJV).

The Church is espoused to Christ: “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2, KJV). The body of believers—or better said, the potential bride—is in the watching and waiting phase of this betrothal period. The bride of Christ is a position prepared for those that are worthy, and unfortunately, because of a seductress called the world, the church will be split in half when Christ returns for His bride: “I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Luke 17:34–36, KJV). Five are foolish and five are wise. Half will be taken to become the bride, and the other half will be left behind to receive their portion with the unbelievers. However, at the end of the tribulation period, the two halves (ten) will rejoin in the kingdom, because the kingdom of heaven is likened unto ten virgins.

It is very important to reemphasize the answer to the following question: Can the five foolish virgins left behind still be a part of the kingdom of heaven? God’s love is unconditional, and Christ’s death saves Christians forever. “If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through

fire” (1 Corinthians 3:14–15, NKJV). When it comes to salvation, it will never be about what man did or did not do. It has always been about what Jesus did for us at the cross. What Christians can lose are rewards, blessings, and fellowship. I hold steadfast to the truth that one can never lose his or her salvation, regardless of how far one strays. Salvation has nothing to do with our works. However, when you talk about the bride of Christ, the most honored and powerful position ever given to a created being, then let us talk about works. It is not sacrilegious to talk about works in conjunction with rewards. Just do not use the word “works” in the same sentence as salvation—this is a gift—unless you are speaking of Jesus’ works.

Some Christians today believe that the rapture of the church is eminent. Here is a different way of looking at this coming event. God is planning on a large wedding for His Son, and every detail will be taken care of, including the transportation for the guests and wedding party. Transported to the pearly gates are the bride and the bridegroom’s friends:

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17, NKJV).

Who are the bridegroom’s friends? They are Jesus’ disciples, as well as those of the Nation of Israel that accepted Christ as their Messiah. “Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?’” (Matthew 9:14-15, NKJV).

First transported will be those already departed brothers and sisters in Christ, and then those that are alive, who remained faithfully waiting and watching for the groom. The time of our departure is soon approaching, so heed Jesus’ words to His church: “Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mark 13:35–37, NKJV).

The ten virgins represent the gentile body of believers. However, only half (the five wise virgins) will be worthy to become the bride of Christ. Jesus said to His potential bride, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2–3, KJV). This is great news, however—the bride-to-be has some duties to perform while Jesus is away preparing a place. You must keep your wedding garments white as snow and be ready for the marriage feast, go to Jesus for a daily foot washing, keep your eyes on the things of God, and walk by faith and not by sight.