

Wise and Foolish Virgins (Mat. 25:1-13)

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Working our way through Matthew 24, now into Matthew 25.

1. The context: Jesus is responding to questions posed by the disciples in verse 3 concerning events yet future to their day.

1. The destruction of the Jewish temple.
2. The sign of his coming.
3. And of the end of the age.

2. Remarks are associated with His Second Coming in Judgment at the end of this age.

- The general characteristics of the end of the age.
- Specific signs of the end of the age.
- The need for believers to watch so they are not ones Jesus comes upon as a thief.

3. These passages do not concern Jesus' coming for the Church at the rapture.

- The coming of Jesus for the Church is imminent, without preconditions — but here there are preconditions.
 - Global persecution and betrayal of Christians (Mat. 24:9).
 - Abomination of Desolation (Mat. 24:15).
 - Signs in the heavens, the sun and the moon (Mat. 24:29).
- This is a period marked by “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Mat. 24:21 cf. Mat. 24:29).
 - Elsewhere in Scripture this time is also characterized by God's wrath, something which Church-age believers are not appointed to.

4. Failure to make this distinction = confusion.

Today's passage (Mathew 25:1-13)

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. ' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.¹

- Take two sessions.
 - Today: understand the setting and context in order to dispel possible confusion.
 - Next time: focus on the principles Jesus is conveying, the application.

The shift from information to application.

- Understanding Christian truth (doctrine) is a prerequisite for proper Christian living.
- Doctrine is *always* linked to practice: first doctrine, then application.

Series of warnings to those who profess to follow Christ.

1. As in the days of Noah (Mat. 24:37-44).

Not watching, house broken into by the thief, taken in judgment.

2. Faithful and evil servant (Mat. 24:45-51).

Master delayed, stops watching, parties with the culture, opposes faithful servants: cut in two and lumped with hypocrites, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

3. Wise and foolish virgins (Mat. 25:1-13) — today's passage.

Unprepared, shut out from the wedding feast, "I do not know you."

4. Parable of Talents (Mat. 25:14-30).

Unprofitable servant cast into outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Describing conditions associated with the previous context.

- "Then" (Mat. 25:1).
- Also translated, "At that time..."
- The two sets of virgins denote two groups of professing Christians prior to the second coming, not the Rapture.

Separate destinies.

- Notice the *two similar with immensely differing destinies* theme throughout this passage.
- Two going about daily activities: one taken, the other left.
- Two professing servants: one faithful the other wicked.
- Two groups of virgins: the wise group enters the kingdom, the foolish group are shut out.
- Two groups of servants: one group (of two) enter the joy of the Lord, the other group (of one) is cast into outer darkness.

Separation based on two categories: the saved and the unsaved.

- Between *believers and unbelievers*: one taken, the other left.
- Among *professing believers*: two *servants*, two groups of *virgins both waiting for the bridegroom*, two groups of *servants* given talents to invest).
- The Bible does not represent unbelievers as “servants”.
 - Much of what the Bible warns is directed toward professing believers who are in a position to hear or read it.

Who are the virgins?

- Are they waiting for the bridegroom to *marry* Him?
- Is this parable endorsing polygamy?

1. Marriage roles - 5 important participants.

- Marriage of a royal King and His queen (Ps. 45).
 - “My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning *the King* [bridegroom]; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; The peoples fall under You. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness *more than Your companions* [groomsmen]. All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad. *Kings’ daughters are among Your honorable women* [bridesmaids]; At Your right hand stands the *queen* [bride] in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father’s house; So the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him. And *the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; The rich among the people will seek your favor* [guests]. The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; Her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; The *virgins, her companions* who follow her, shall be brought to You.” (Ps 45:1-14)

- Groom
 - Jesus refers to Himself as *the bridegroom* (Mat. 9:15).
- Bride
 - Paul refers to believers as being betrothed to Christ, “Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Co 11:1–2).
 - Believers compared to a woman who is bound to her husband until death. “Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, *that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God*” (Ro 7:4).
 - In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul makes the analogy between a husband and wife and Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:24). In the same way that husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies, so Christ loves believers: “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:30-32). Paul is saying that in the same way believers are merged with Christ, as the body of Christ, so should husbands consider their wives.²
- Groomsmen, friends of the groom.
 - Jesus refers to His followers in the early part of His ministry as *friends of the bridegroom* (Mat. 9:15).
 - John the Baptist referred to Jesus as *the bridegroom* who has *the bride* and to himself as a *friend of the bridegroom*, but not part of the bride (John 3:29).
 - Companion's were provided for Samson's wedding to a Philistine woman (Jg. 14:11). One from among the companion's is referred to as “his best man” (Jg. 14:20).
- Bridesmaids
 - “Daughters of Jerusalem” in the Song of Solomon (Sos. 1:5; 2:7; 5:1; 5:8; 6:1; 6:8; 6:13; 8:13).
- Guests
 - Those attending the wedding (often a smaller number), those attending the reception (a much larger number).

2. Early Jewish wedding practices.

- Dr. Renald Showers offers the following description of early Jewish wedding practices:⁴
 1. “First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price [Ac 20:28; Eph 5:25-27]. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day.”
 2. “The second step, which occurred a year or more after the first step, was the

fetching of the bride. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride in order to bring her to his home [Joh 14:3; 1Th 4:13-18]. In connection with this step, two other things should be noted. First, it was the father of the groom who determined the timing [Mt 24:36]. Second, prior to the groom's leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode [Joh 14:2].”

3. “This was followed by the third step, the wedding ceremony, to which a few would be invited [Re 19:7]. Prior to the wedding ceremony, the bride underwent a ritual immersion for ritual cleansing [1Co 3:12-15; Re 19:7-8].”
4. “The fourth step, the marriage feast, would follow and could last for as many as seven days. Many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony [Mt 22:1-14; Mt 25:1-13].” “In the Marriage of the Lamb all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident.”⁵

A. Scriptural correspondence.

1. Paying the bride price.
 - “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God *which He purchased with His own blood*” (Ac 20:28).
2. Preparing the place.
 - “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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (Jn 14:2-3).
3. Wedding ceremony.
 - “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready” (Re 19:7).
 - Notice this occurs prior to the return of Jesus later in the same chapter.
4. Wedding feast: “And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son...” (Mt 22:1-2).
 - Many are invited - it is not just a wedding, but the festival or banquet celebrating the marriage which came before.
 - Faith of a gentile centurion who believed Jesus could heal at a distance in comparison with the lack of faith in Israel.
 - “When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and *sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 8:10-12).
 - Also mentioned here: **γαμους** [*gamous*], plural form of **γαμος** [*gamos*] denoting “a wedding or marriage festival, a wedding banquet, a wedding

feast.”

- Notice after the marriage of the bride in Rev. 19:7 the text refers to others invited to the marriage *supper* or *feast*.
 - “Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God”” (Re 19:9).
- Possibly a celebration of communion.
 - “When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes”” (Lk 22:14–18).

Summary

- This passage is not about polygamy: the virgins are not going to marry the bride.
- These ten virgins do not appear to be part of the immediate bridal party (bridesmaids) but rather represent "chaste" individuals invited to the subsequent wedding feast.⁶
- The private portion of the wedding has already taken place before the return of the Groom (Rev. 19:7 cf. Rev. 19:14).
- The parable concerns attendance at the *wedding feast* which follows upon the wedding ceremony.
- Thus, the virgins do not represent the Church.
 - Believers of the present age will not be present at the coming of Jesus in judgment—having been previously taken at the Rapture.
 - Instead, they will be returning with the groom to earth (John 14:3; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:14).
- The virgins represent believers of the end of the age who are to watch for the arrival of the bridegroom signalling the beginning of the wedding feast: which appears to usher in the millennial kingdom to follow.
- Next time we'll look at more of the details of the passage and what it is intended to teach.

Endnotes:

1. NKJV, Mat. 25:1-13
2. A typological hint as to the bride of the Lamb can also be found in a study of the book of Ruth. The story involves Naomi (a Jew), Ruth (a Gentile), and Boaz (the kinsman-redeemer, see commentary on Revelation 5:1). Through the sequence of events recorded in the book, Boaz (who represents the Messiah) takes Ruth as his Gentile bride (representing the Church) and Naomi (representing Israel) is restored to her land.
3. Ref-0202, p. 407
4. There is considerable variation among commentators concerning the actual steps in Jewish wedding ceremonies in Biblical

times. Some hold that these virgins are waiting to accompany the groom *prior to the marriage* to fetch the bride from her house and return to the groom's (father's) house. Others hold that the marriage has already been performed and these are waiting to be invited to the subsequent marriage feast. "The presentation of the bride to the bridegroom would be made in a private inner chamber. At the conclusion of the presentation ceremony, the assembled guests would eagerly await the appearance of the bridegroom with his bride. In the Lord's parable ten virgins had been invited as guests and were awaiting the appearance of the bridegroom with his bride."³

5. [Ref-0220](#), pp. 162-163
6. Compare with Rev. [7](#) and [14](#).

Sources:

- NKJV** Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
- Ref-0202** Dwight J. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981).
- Ref-0220** Renald E. Showers, *Maranatha: Our Lord, Come!* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995). [www.foigm.org].

Links Mentioned Above

- [a](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm) - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.