

TRUE AND FALSE LIGHTS
Matthew 25:1-13

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Since I have been doing this series of messages on the Olivet Discourse, I have asked myself, “Why do I believe in the coming of Christ for His Church when most people do not care about it at all?” I concluded that I believe because I have been regenerated by God’s Spirit and have been give the capacity to understand God’s Word. Those who have been born of God really look for the coming of Christ.
- B. But then I have said, “How is it that many professing Christians give assent to the coming of Christ but have no real desire to live for Jesus Christ now?” It is to this problem that the parable of the Ten Virgins or Ten Maidens is addressed. Jesus Christ Himself will answer the problem of why so many believe that Christ is coming again but show no real desire in their Christian experience to crown Christ as Lord of their lives.
- C. This is a difficult parable and it is not easy to get every detail to make sense, for parables are designed to teach a general truth. The parable of the Ten Maidens is given to teach the necessity of watching for the return of Christ. The spiritual lesson in this parable is that men are to know they are saved by Christ, living in the realm of spiritual reality, rather than lost, living merely on the strength of human resources.

II. THE DESIGNATION OF THE TEN MAIDENS -- Matthew 25:1

- A. “Then” -- The “then” tells us that there is no chapter break between chapters 24 and 25. Therefore we conclude that this parable is designed for those who live in the intervening time between our Lord’s first coming and the second coming. It is clearly intended to show the Christian how he should watch until the Lord returns. If we miss the point of this parable, we shall be unable to watch for Christ’s coming as He desires us to watch.
- B. “Shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto..” -- Christ uses this parable to show that one’s entrance into the future kingdom is related to his personal faith in Christ and his desire to do the will of God.
- C. “Ten virgins (maidens), which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom.”

1. The Lord chooses to use a wedding scene as a parable to illustrate what He means by the command to be constantly watching. He does not mention the bride, for she is not central to the purpose of this parable. Christ focuses attention on the bridegroom and the ten young ladies who were invited to the marriage. **NOTE:** By parable, the bridegroom is Christ and the bride (who is not mentioned but implied) is the Church. The Ten Maidens represent the visible Church on earth with its earnest and careless members. The coming of the bridegroom illustrates the coming of Christ for the Church at the Rapture. On the surface all the maidens are looking for the return of the bridegroom or Christ.
2. We must understand the marriage customs of the Jews in those to appreciate this parable. In oriental marriages the bridegroom rather than the bride is the center of attention. Weddings were always held at night and the bridegroom would go to the home of the bride to take her to the wedding. In the bride's home would be ten maidens attending her. When the bridegroom came, the maidens would be shooed out of the house and the bridegroom and bride would spend time alone together. These ten maidens would wait for the bridegroom outside of the bride's home. The bridegroom would then leave the bride's home with his bride and go to his home or his parent's home for the marriage and the marriage feast. The ten maidens would lead the way with their lamps as the lovers to be wed walked through the dark streets to the place of the marriage.

III. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TEN MAIDENS -- Matthew 25: 2, 4

- A. "And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." -- While all ten of the maidens have some understanding of the coming of the bridegroom, Christ, they are divided into two groups. Each group has a distinct conduct while they are waiting. Obviously the five wise virgins are intended to represent Spirit-indwelt, consecrated believers. The five foolish ones are just as clearly intended to represent unbelievers, for the Lord says to them, "I do not know you" (25:12). The foolish are mere professors who have only an external Christianity.
- B. "They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." -- The "lamps" are symbolic of the outward marks of the Christian life. All ten maidens have a doctrinal understanding of the coming of Christ but the foolish maidens have no oil for their lamps and could not be light to the world. They only have an external religion with no reality. They have an outward form of godliness but deny the power thereof (II Tim. 3:5). **POINT:** There are many professing Christians who have a head knowledge of Christian doctrine but have never really been regenerated by the Spirit of God. With their lips they talk of Christ, but their hearts are from Him.

IV. THE DEPARTURE OF THE TEN MAIDENS -- Matthew 25:5, 6

A. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.”

1. No explanation is given as to why the bridegroom tarried. This seems, however, to be another hint from the Lord that His absence would be long extended, and history bears this out. It has been almost two-thousand years. But He is coming! **NOTE** There are good reasons why the Lord Jesus has tarried. He must accomplish His plans and purposes for this earth in this present age. The gospel must be declared to the world, the elect must all be called in, God’s purposes with His people must come to pass, and His general plan for the world must be accomplished. Then He will return.
2. Notice carefully that all ten of the maidens fell asleep while the bridegroom tarried. However, the context does not indicate sin or negligence on the part of the maidens. There is no hint of rebuke or disapproval expressed by the Lord for their sleeping. It was a natural thing to do, for it was night and the bridegroom was delayed. **NOTE:** Perhaps the Lord is teaching us something about how we are to watch for His return. This may indicate that the Lord does not mean unceasing, conscious, anticipation of His return. This is, we are not always to be watching as a sentry would stand on duty. If the Christian is constantly looking into the sky for Christ’s return, then he will never get anything done in life. Our Lord must mean that watching involves an inner awareness of His coming, but also allows time for normal activities. Money to be made, investments looked into, food cooked, babies washed, school lessons prepared, weddings held and funerals attended. All the usual activities of life must go on as we are watching for Christ’s return. **NOTE:** While we are waiting and engaged in the normal activities of life, there is no need to feel guilty because we have not been thinking of the Lord’s return. It is quite possible to be so heavenly minded that a person is no earthly good.

B. “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.” -- All ten of the maidens are awakened by the midnight call that the bridegroom was coming. **NOTE:** This is the call of Christ who will call the Church to be with Himself (I Thess. 4:16-18). Perhaps the cry will be, “Church, com home!” or “Behold, the Bridegroom!”

V. THE DIFFERENCE IN THE TEN VIRGINS -- Matthew 25:7-9

- A. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." -- Upon the arrival of the bridegroom the ten maidens began to trim their lamps but the lamps of the foolish maidens immediately go out. A wick without oil may give off a momentary light but then there is a puff of smoke and the light is snuffed out. **NOTE:** The foolish are those who profess Christ but have no personal relationship with Him and have no real desire to keep the eternal moral law of God. Did not they go forth to meet the Bridegroom? Yes, but that does not make them saved persons. Their profession was empty. **NOTE:** The temporary light of the foolish maidens represents the ordinary lives of unsaved church members. There is no reality of salvation, externalism but no power, religion but no regeneration, churchianity but not Christianity, human works and not Spirit-works. This facade, the external veneer will go up like a puff of smoke when the Lord returns.
- B. "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us you 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."
1. The foolish maidens panic when they realize their profession of Christ is phony and empty with no reality. Then they attempt to borrow oil from the wise maidens.
 2. Oil in the Bible is often used symbolically of the Holy Spirit. In this context, it refers to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that enables a true Christian to shine as a light to the world all the days of his life (Romans 8:9). The foolish maidens had no oil, and it is the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes an unbeliever from a believer.
 3. When Christ appeared, the foolish maidens realized that they did not have the Holy Spirit and are unsaved. Immediately they try to borrow oil from the wise maidens, but the wise maidens refuse to give it. This refusal to give the oil indicates, not want of will but want of power. Why? Because each person must experience the new birth for himself. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the sense of genuine regeneration must be an individual matter. Each person in this world must be saved personally and individually by Christ. A person must accept the gift of salvation and the indwelling of the Spirit for himself.

VI. THE DIVISION OF THE TEN MAIDENS -- Matthew 25:10-12

- A. "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." -- While the foolish maidens were attempting to find oil, the bridegroom comes and takes the wise maidens to the wedding. And he shuts the door. **NOTE:** These unbelieving,

professing Christians were left out of the Rapture of the true Church because they were not ready to meet the Lord. Christ shut the door on them.

- B. “Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.” -- When the foolish maidens finally arrive, the door is shut to them. They obviously had not found any oil and were not permitted to go to the marriage. **NOTE:** The person who does not have the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is shut out from heaven and the presence of Christ. In terms of the five foolish maidens, they were fairly well informed in regard to the Lord’s return, but they were not “born again” people. When the warning came, they turned away to seek something which would admit them to the privileges of the redeemed but just as they turned away, the moment of the Rapture came and they were on the outside. No matter how much they wanted to go to the wedding they could not for they were not saved.
- C. “But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” -- When the foolish maidens want in, The bridegroom claims that He never really knew them. They were not really saved. **NOTE:** Our Lord gives a faithful, honest revelation of the reality of Christ in their lives. He simply reveals what has been in their hearts all along. These folks were strangers to Christ no matter how much doctrine they knew or religion they professed. **NOTE:** Christ is speaking about professing Christians who do not know Him intimately as the living Lord. They have only a superficial knowledge of scriptural truth. They have human commitment rather than divine enablement. They have religious morality without the new nature from God. They have the Bible but not the Lord of the Bible. Orthodox knowledge is worthless unless it leads to the surrender of self to Christ. It is those who do the will of the Father who are genuinely saved (Matthew 7:21-23). **NOTE:** Christ is talking about desire to do the will of God, not perfection. No one can be perfect but all Christians must desire to do the will of God, no matter how many times they stumble in their attempts to do the will of God. Is your motive to do the will of God? It is, you have the Holy Spirit in you.

VII. THE DEMAND OF CHRIST -- Matthew 25:13

- A. A. “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.” -- Christ commands and demands the true Christians be constantly watching for His return. We are to watch by knowing we have received Christ and show a desire to do the will of God.
- B. Christ is the final judge and He will show men what they really are. The door will be shut to the rank rejecter, who never tried to get in, and to the foolish person who never took Christ seriously.
- C. What an awful thing! To be raised in a Christian culture, bred in a Christian home, confirmed, baptized and convinced of certain doctrinal truths, even the

second coming of Christ and still not be saved. How awful it will be for some who are loyal churchmen to hear the words, "I never knew you!" Examine yourself to see if you be in the Faith. If not, flee immediately to Christ who alone can save you. If Christ is your Lord and Savior, someday you shall hear the words, "Behold, the Bridegroom!"