

## Lesson 9 – 26 December 2010.

### Parables About the King's Return.

**Lesson Scope:** [Matthew 25](#)

#### Lesson Focus

With the cross experience near at hand, Jesus continued to redeem the time with His disciples. Matthew 25 continues with Christ's discourse on the Mount of Olives. The subject of Jesus' coming again is a prevailing thought in this part of the discourse. The three parables from 24:45-25:30 deal with our absent Lord, emphasizing our readiness for His return at any time.

The parable of the ten virgins concurs with Eastern wedding customs. Many friends waited along the way to join in the procession as the bridegroom went to the bride's house and brought her back to his house for the wedding feast. The darkness of the night necessitated the use of a torch or lamp. The parable of the talents represents spiritual gifts given to individuals for the furtherance of the Gospel. Faithfully fulfilling our personal responsibilities in kingdom work is clearly the thrust of these parables. Jesus' imminent return calls us to constant readiness. Our destiny in that day will depend on our preparation and performance in the present day.

The parable of the ten virgins focuses mainly on one thing—to keep our minds on the Lord and be ready when He comes. Stress the importance of vigilance. There are so many casualties when people are not alert both physically and spiritually.

The parable of the talents implies that we are in training for a larger service in an order yet to be, and that our standing there will depend on the faithfulness of our stewardship here. In both of these parables the implication is clear—we only have one life to live. We will not have opportunity to go back and start over.

**Lesson Aim:** To inspire diligent preparation for Jesus' imminent return.

**Theme Verses:** [1 Thessalonians 5:4-5](#). “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”

## **Lesson Text.**

### **Wise Virgins**

#### [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup>And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. <sup>3</sup>They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: <sup>4</sup>But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup>And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. <sup>7</sup>Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. <sup>12</sup>But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. <sup>13</sup>Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

### **Faithful Servants**

#### [Matthew 25:14-21](#)

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. <sup>15</sup>And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. <sup>16</sup>Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. <sup>17</sup>And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. <sup>18</sup>But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. <sup>19</sup>After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. <sup>20</sup>And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. <sup>21</sup>His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

#### [Matthew 25:24-28](#)

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and

gathering where thou hast not strowed: <sup>25</sup>And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. <sup>26</sup>His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: <sup>27</sup>Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. <sup>28</sup>Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

### **Matthew 25:30**

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## **Questions for Study**

### **Wise Virgins**

1. What is the basic difference between the five wise and five foolish virgins?
2. What essentials to a readiness for Christ's return are demonstrated by the actions of the five wise virgins?
3. List some earmarks of one whose spiritual life is waning.
4. What solemn truths are illustrated by the closed door?

### **Faithful Servants**

5. What are some implications of distributing the talents according to ability?
6. How might we be guilty of burying our talent?
7. List some attitudes that are counterproductive to faithful service.
8. Enumerate some rewards of the diligent.

## **Analyzing the Passage**

The bridegroom represents our Lord Jesus Christ. The ten virgins symbolize professing Christianity. The two groups differ from each other only in their level of preparedness to endure to the end. As children of God, we are on a journey heavenward. We are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The exact time is unknown to man. "The bridegroom [tarries]" (Matthew 25:5), resulting in a time of waiting for this important event.

Jesus is the Lord who traveled to a far country for an indeterminate length of time. It is He who "called his own servants, and delivered ... to every man according to his several ability" (Matthew 25:14-15). He expects all to be busy in His service while He is absent. Opportunity brings

accountability: "the Lord ... cometh, and reckoneth with them" (Matthew 25:19).

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Wise Virgins**

1. All ten virgins appear eager to go forth and meet the bridegroom face to face (Matthew 25:1-7). It is a noble desire to want to see our Saviour face to face and to share in the marriage supper of the Lamb. Profession, good motivation, and eager anticipation are essential to readiness for Christ's eager but diligent preparation involves much more.

2. Not all who appear ready for Christ's return are prepared (Matthew 25:2, 12). God hates hypocrisy. No amount of pretending we are righteous will get us into heaven. We must never become satisfied with good intentions, nor may we ever think, "I am good enough" or "This is as far as I will go." The presence or lack of enduring spiritual life is the primary difference between the prepared and the unprepared.

3. Preparing for Christ's return is a personal matter (Matthew 25:8-9). Without the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit within the individual believer's heart, there is no spiritual life. We do not ride into heaven on the coattails of our ancestors, ministry, or anyone else. We do rejoice that God has made salvation and the gift of His Holy Spirit available to whosoever will.

When God shuts the door, the opportunity for preparation is forever past (Matthew 25:10-12). God's gracious extension of mercy to the sinner is only in this life. Death seals man's destiny. The Biblical imperative is to be ready for Jesus' return at all times. To postpone proper preparation for a later time, a second chance, or at the return of our Saviour would be making the same mistake as the five foolish virgins. When the bridegroom came, those who were ready went in, and those that were getting ready were shut out.

5. Watchfulness is essential to a constant readiness for Christ's return. (Matthew 25:13). Readiness for Christ's return consists not in idly staring into heaven but in actively doing those things that are pleasing to Him. But while we are busy, we may not become careless in watching or preoccupied with our work. We should rather work each day as though we expect to meet Him and give account of our work at the close of the day. We work while we watch and watch while we work.

## **Faithful Servants**

6. The Lord gives His servants varied spiritual gifts, responsibilities, and opportunities (Matthew 25:15). There are differing gifts in the body of Christ, but all fill a valuable role. Each member is able to do something profitable. Is it a valid reason to refuse teaching the Sunday school class, leading songs, or doing some other service activity because other people are more capable? While there may sometimes be valid reasons to refuse a service opportunity our goal should always be to do what we can, where we can, when we can to the edifying of the body.

7. Using our gifts and opportunities to further Christ's kingdom will aid its in preparing for His return (Matthew 25:16-17, 27). All who receive the gift of God are compelled to do something with it. We cannot be neutral. Either we help or we hinder God's work by the attitudes with which we relate to the gifts He bestows upon us. The vibrant Christian will respond spontaneously to his Lord. It will be his delight to serve his Master in whatever way he can.

8. Our accountability for how we use our Lord's opportunities should foster diligence as we prepare for Christ's return (Matthew 25:19-21, 24-28, 30). The tarrying of our Lord does not allow space for carelessness; it rather provides time for greater opportunity. May we be faithful in keeping the charge given to us. There is a crown for all the faithful, which will be given only at the end of the race. So let us run that we may obtain the prize.

## **Important Teachings**

1. All ten virgins appear eager to go forth and meet the bridegroom face to face (Matthew 25:1-7).

2. Not all who appear ready for Christ's return are prepared (Matthew 25:2, 12).

3. Preparing for Christ's return is a personal matter (Matthew 25:8-9).

4. When God shuts the door, the opportunity for preparation is forever past (Matthew 25:10-12).

5. Watchfulness is essential to a constant readiness for Christ's return (Matthew 25:13).

6. The Lord gives His servants varied spiritual gifts, responsibilities, and opportunities (Matthew 25:15).

7. Using our gifts and opportunities to further Christ's kingdom will aid us in preparing for His return (Matthew 25:16-17, 27).

8. Our accountability for how we use our Lord's opportunities should foster diligence as we prepare for Christ's return (Matthew 25:19-21, 24-28, 30).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What is the basic difference between the five wise and five foolish virgins?

The amount of oil that each possessed was all that varied. The presence or the lack of enduring spiritual life is the primary difference between the prepared and the unprepared. The five foolish virgins provided for the present. The five wise virgins prepared for both present and what was to come. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

2. What essentials to a readiness for Christ's return are demonstrated by the actions of the five wise virgins?

They took extra oil in their vessels. There is not a moment in the Christian's battle against Satan and evil that he can afford to be without the Holy Spirit's presence. Our lamp must have oil if it is to keep burning. We must recognize our personal obligation and accountability to be ready for Christ's return. Keeping our lamp trimmed is essential.

3. List some earmarks of one whose spiritual life is waning.

A waning spiritual life expresses itself in being concerned only about the present. Or it may be failing to consider how my present actions will affect me or my offspring in the coming years and in eternity. Laying aside Bible-based practices and teachings that we once embraced is a sign of drift. Depending on others' experiences to take us through will bring us up short.

4. What solemn truths are illustrated by the closed door?

When God shuts the door, the day of opportunity is over. No amount of pleading will change the verdict. Many will be numbered among the unknown—"I know you not" (Matthew 25:12).

5. What are some implications of distributing the talents according to ability?

The owner of these goods was interested in receiving back the best possible return. He also was careful not to overload one with a burden greater than he could bear. We should believe that our Lord has given each of us just what He sees is best. Gifts differ, but when we do our best for God's honor and glory, we will be blest.

6. How might we be guilty of burying our talent?

By doing nothing our gifts and abilities become unprofitable to both God

and ourselves. Refusing to serve in church work because others can do it better or because we are afraid of blundering is equivalent to burying our talent in pride. Perhaps sometimes we are just too lazy to study or to pursue a given work to our fullest ability with the result that our talents and abilities develop no further, and we never excel.

7. List some attitudes that are counterproductive to faithful service.

I am less able than my brother or sister. Feelings of irresponsibility, fear, and anxiety will always hinder, as will an improper view of our Lord and Master.

8. Enumerate some rewards of the diligent.

The diligent receive commendation and the assurance of a job well done. God will finally exalt them—"I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21). They will enjoy an abundant entrance into the joy of the Lord with its sweet communion and happy fellowship.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Time is gliding like the shuttle of the weaver.

And the day is swiftly passing by.

If tonight should be the coming of the Bridegroom,

Are you ready for the midnight cry'?

Are your lamps all filled and ready to be lighted,

Is the wedding garment now close by?

Just outside the Bridegroom now may be approaching,

Are you ready for the midnight cry?

—Johnson Oatman, Jr.

### **Research Guide**

Halley's Bible Handbook has some interesting thoughts on Matthew 24 and 25.