

Redeeming the Time - Part 5

FIVE SINNERS Matthew 25:1-13

STIMULATE

** Our study last time in Matthew 19:27-20:16 regarding "**Fair Salaries**" taught us ten principles that would prevent us from becoming envious or jealous about our fellow Christians that God has blessed. Being freed from that sinful trait, we are better prepared to "**Redeem the Time**".

Those ten principles were:

- 1) God sovereignly initiates and accomplishes salvation. [Chapter 20, V.1] (John 6:39)
- 2) God alone establishes the terms of salvation. [V.2] (John 3:16)
- 3) God continues to call men into His kingdom. [V.5] (John 5:17, 2Peter 3:9)
- 4) God redeems everyone who is willing. [V.4] (John 6:37)
- 5) God is compassionate to those who have no resources and acknowledge their hopelessness.[V.1] (Luke 18:9-14)
- 6) All who came into the vineyard worked. [V.8] (John 15:8)
- 7) God has divine authority and ability to keep His promises. [V.13] (Romans 5:20-21)
- 8) God gives more than we deserve. [V.13-14] (Romans 6:23)
- 9) Humility is the only right attitude in which a person can come to the Lord. [V.15] (1Timothy 1:15)
- 10) God's grace oversees all that we do! [V.2] (Romans 3:21-24)

** Which of these glorious principles were you particularly thankful for this past week?

Obviously we are to be thankful for all ten, but for myself numbers 1, 5, 8 and 10 really stood out.

MOTIVATE

** As we bring our series entitled "**Redeeming the Time**" to a close there is one truth that must be learned by those who call themselves Christians. That truth comes from the parable of the "Ten Virgins" and is found in Matthew 25:1-13. Please join me there as Jesus teaches us about "**Five Sinners**" and how they were not prepared for His return.

Read Passage (V.1-7) (V.8-13)

Opening Prayer

Five Sinners

INVESTIGATE

V. 1 ** To enhance our understanding of this parable, there are two things we must know. First, the framework or timing of the parable and second, what were the components of a Jewish wedding in the time of our Lord?

1) The setting for this parable is found back in chapter 24, verse three where Jesus is sitting down with His disciples on the Mount of Olives. It is Wednesday of Passion week, just two days before the crucifixion of our Lord. Do you see the question they ask of Him?

"...what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" The answer that Jesus gives them will go from verse four of chapter 24, through our parable and on to chapter 26, verse 1 and is known as the Olivet discourse with His disciples.

2) A Jewish marriage consisted of three parts. The first was the engagement, usually arranged for by the fathers of the bride and groom. Second, the betrothal, which began with a marriage ceremony in which the couple would exchange their vows before family and friends. At this point the couple was considered married, although the marriage had not been physically consummated and the two had never lived together. The betrothal could last for many months, even up to one year, during which time the groom would establish himself in a business or trade and would make provisions for a place for the couple to live.

At the end of the betrothal period would come the third and final phase of the wedding. It was known as the wedding feast. It would last up to one week and begin with the groom and his groomsmen going to the bride's home, where she was waiting with her bridesmaids. Together the bride, groom and their attendants would then parade through the streets proclaiming that the wedding feast was about to begin. The procession was typically at night, and lamps or torches were used by the wedding party to light their way and help draw attention to the feast.

At the end of the feast period, a close friend of the groom (the best man) would take the hand of the bride and place it in the hand of the groom, and the couple would for the first time be left alone together. The marriage would be consummated and the couple would live together in their new home from that time forward. It was this third part of the marriage rite that Jesus used as the framework for this parable.

**** Remembering now that the Lord has been describing the signs of His second coming, Jesus uses this parable to compare one's spiritual preparedness for entrance into the kingdom of heaven with the preparedness of a certain ten virgins who served as bridesmaids at a wedding. What did all ten of these bridesmaids do in concert with each other?**

They "went out to meet the bridegroom". As the little procession came to the bride's home, they all went out to join it.

**** What were they all carrying?**

Their own "lamps". [lampas] - tightly wrapped cloths attached to long poles. cf. John 18:3

V. 2 ** Well, so far so good, but what rather stark contrast can be seen between the two groups of five virgins?

"...five of them were foolish, and five were prudent." This is not merely a contrast between air-heads and smart folk, it is far more serious than that, as we shall see!

V. 3 ** These ten bridesmaids represent professing Christians who claim to love the prospect of Christ's appearing and who demonstrate outward readiness for entrance into His kingdom. (cf. 2Timothy 4:8)

In their outward appearance the ten were indistinguishable. They were all dressed appropriately and each had their own torch to carry in the procession. What was the difference? What made the foolish one's so foolish?

"...they took no oil with them..." Their torches looked exactly those of the others, but with no oil they had nothing with which to make them burn. A torch without fuel was obviously worthless, and a profession of faith in Jesus without a saving relationship to Him is infinitely more worthless.

V. 4 ** How were the prudent bridesmaids different?

They each "took oil in flasks along with their lamps." Their outward profession was substantiated by an inward possession. They had the oil of preparedness, namely, the reality of the light of the saving grace of God within them.

The oil is similar to the "wedding garments" in Jesus' parable of the wedding feast that a king gave for his son. All see - Matthew 22:2-14 [V.11-12]

V. 5 ** What phrase does Jesus now use to reinforce the unexpected nature of His second coming?

"Now while the bridegroom was delaying..."
cf. Matthew 24:36, 42, 44, 50.

** What happened to the ten bridesmaids who were waiting for the bridegroom, when he did not come at the time that they had supposed he would?

"...they all got drowsy and began to sleep."

** Was this laziness on their part?

Absolutely not! Even the prudent got sleepy. As life goes on while we wait for the Lord, there will be those times that we will need to rest. The point is that we need to be prepared before we rest!

V. 6 ** What rather startling thing takes place, that wakes them from their sleep?

A great shout at midnight! At the time of our deepest sleep, the pronouncement is made, "Come out to meet him". In the same manner, those living at the end of the great Tribulation will have seen all the signs of His coming and will know that His appearing is imminent. But they will not know the moment of His arrival until they see Him "coming on the clouds of the sky". cf. Matthew 24:29-30

V. 7 ** What did the ten bridesmaids do when they heard the call?

They all got up and "trimmed their lamps [torches]" This was done to enhance their preparedness by cutting away the loose frays of cloth.

V. 8 ** What immediate problem develops for the five foolish virgins who had looked the same as the prudent only did not "possess the oil of eternal life"?

They could not keep their torches lit! So they asked for oil from the prudent virgins.

V. 9 ** What response does that draw from the prudent ones?

"No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves."

** Was that a cruel or unusual response on behalf of the prudent group?

No, Just as one person cannot transfer his physical life to another person, neither can he or she share their spiritual life. Like physical life, spiritual life is a direct, individual gift from God and is nontransferable. cf. Romans 9:3-4

** If the oil in this parable is the reality of the light of the saving grace of God, who then is represented by the "dealers" in this verse?

It simply is speaking of the one true source of the oil or of securing salvation from its only source, God Himself. cf. Isaiah 55:1-3

V.10 ** What happened while the five foolish bridesmaids went out to "find" God?

The bridegroom [Jesus] came "and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast..." cf. Revelation 19:7-9

** We were made "ready" by the saving grace of God, but what happens after the redeemed entered the wedding feast?

"...the door was shut." A tragic moment in history!

V.11 ** Because all of the shops were closed now, it being after midnight, what do the five foolish [unsaved] virgins now ask of the Lord, while they are still lacking the oil?

"Lord, lord, open up for us." This speaks of the most frightening moment in all of time for the superficial, hypocritical church goer. Here the person who has been looking on the outside as one who is prudent, meets the reality of their carnality through the utter lack of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. cf. Matthew 7:21-23

V.12 ** What is the terrifying answer back from the Lord?

"Truly I say to you, I do not know you!" Religious effort or trying to look like those who know Christ but never being truly transformed, will only produce a tragic end.

V.13 ** What is the stern warning now given to those who would be alive during the last days of the Tribulation?

"Be on the alert, for you do not know the day nor the hour." As mentioned earlier, Jesus repeats this warning no less than five times during His Olivet discourse with His disciples. cf. 24:36, 42, 44, 50

** If you were to put that warning into your own words, with this parable as a backdrop, how would you phrase it?

BE PREPARED! Be sure to have your torch ready with the oil of God's gracious saving message hidden in your heart.

EXTRICATE

** What similarities did these ten bridesmaids or virgins have in common?

They all looked the same on the outside.

They all had lamps.

They all intellectually knew about the bridegroom.

DELINEATE

** What made five of them turn out to be foolish?

They thought that they could go to the wedding feast without possessing the "oil" of salvation through Jesus Christ.

EVALUATE

** Where do you stand with Jesus? If you wish to “**Redeem the Time**” you have here on earth, have you given your life to Jesus Christ? Have you asked Him to forgive your sin and to become the Lord and Savior of your life?

ACTIVATE

** If you have, then praise the Lord for His saving grace on your behalf. If we want to be "**Redeeming the Time**" for our Lord's sake, we need to share His gospel with all those around us who think that they can make it to heaven without Him. Like the "**Five Sinners**" in our parable today, they will never make it without knowing the truth.

Let's commit to do just that!

Closing prayer