



The Ten Virgins by Chris Bowen

The primary significance of this parable is to be found in Christ's words immediately preceding the following quotes "who then is a faithful and wise steward?" Matt 24:45 and in the parable of the virgins, he shows in that wisdom consists, and in the parable following the talents he shows the quality of faithfulness.'

The command that Jesus added to the parable of the virgins is "watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day or the hour when the son of man cometh," Matt 25.13.

Now if we look at Matt 25:6 "and at midnight," this midnight is not what we think it is, it is really the hours just before morning. If we look at Acts 20:7 it says: "and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and continued his speech until midnight."

Everyone knows the rest of the story that Paul was preaching to them in the upper chamber and the young man was sitting on the window sill. The young man was overcome by sleep, and fell to his death. Paul saw this and embraced him to bring his life back. After the day had broken they departed.

Also we know that at the second coming of our Lord the sun and moon shall be in darkness and the earth will also be darkened like it was midnight. It is shown in Mark 13:24 "but in those days (that is the latter days) that the sun shall be darkened and the moon not give her light, then the son of man shall come upon the earth."

We know it is talking about the latter days because in Mark 13:4 Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Jesus about the latter days.

Now we will go back to Matt 25:6 where it says, "behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." John the Baptist is the first to use the figure of the bridegroom in the New Testament. The occasion was when the disciples told him about the success of those who attended the teachings of Jesus. John knew that both his baptism and that of Jesus were of God. Because of this there was no room for jealousy, nor did John see any. On the other hand his relationship excluded it for he was a friend of the Bridegroom, we see this in John 3:29. The friend was the groomsman who sort the hand of the bride for the groom, and then arranged the marriage. When the marriage was taking place, and he heard the voice of the bridegroom welcoming the bride, his tasks, and his Joy was full. So John, the friend rejoiced to hear the people were seeking Jesus and being welcomed by him as the bridegroom welcomes the bride. Later John's disciples came to Jesus with the question "why do the disciples of John and the Pharisee's fast but not the disciples of Jesus." His reply was in the form of a parable: The Bridegroom.

In Luke 5: 33-34 it says "can ye make the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them but the day will come, when the bridegroom will be taken away, then shall they fast in those days." It is remarked that John, who lived in Judea, spoke as the friend of the bridegroom in John 3:29, Jesus who lived in Galilee spoke of the sons of the bride chamber. The former refers to the practice common in Judea, but followed in Galilee, the latter was a general term for all invited guests. There is perfect accuracy in the details of the records.

When Jesus referred to himself as the bridegroom he was first of all reminding the disciples of John, of their part in the parable. John had the joy of the groomsman. The disciples of Jesus had the freedom and joy of the friends and guests at the wedding. Because of the law, the marriage ceremony lasted a week and it was a time of mixed celebrations. The ordinances of the strict feast of the Day of Atonement were modified. Everything had to serve a purpose of bringing gladness to bride and bridegroom. In the same way the presence of Jesus was itself the occasion and reason for joy.

Jesus recognised that the joy would be short lived. He then gives the first public hint of the appointed end of his ministry when he said that the bridegroom would be taken away and from this his disciples would have a sense of loss and would fast.

We look at the customs in the land of Palestine, in the days of Jesus ministry for the atmosphere and the heart of the story. The very basis of the thought of Jesus goes back to the Old Testament teachings. Jeremiah uses the figure "turn, O, backsliding children, for I am married unto you." God was the bridegroom to Israel. In Psalms 19:1-14 it tells of the heavens declaring Gods glory in which the sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. When John applied the figure of the bridegroom to Jesus, Jesus also made use of it in reference to himself. There was implied a claim that Jesus was Israel's Messiah and that he was a manifestation of God and one to whom the true Israel was related as wife.

Now we go back to Matt 25:6 where it says "cry." This would have awoken them and it would have then shown who have been prepared and were ready to meet the Lord and who are poorly equipped and unready for the event. Verse 8 says; "give us your oil." The only answer possible is the one given, and that is that we should go to those who sell and buy for themselves in the market place which is the truth, namely the Bible. In Isaiah 55:1-3 it says; "come ye, buy and eat ye come, buy wine and milk without money and without price, incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear and your soul shall live." This is the prophet's explanation of how wine and milk of God converted can be changed. At the present time there is opportunity to buy, it will pass. The foolish therefore, find themselves not included in the bridal procession. When they want to come to the door it is closed. A demand for admission brings only the answer "I know you not." The form "Lord Lord" in verse 11 and Christ's answer "I know you not" links the parable with the similar saying of the sermon of the mount, in Matt 7:21-28. The protest "I never knew you" occurs both in this quotation from the Sermon on the Mount and the parable of the virgins. In both of these there was a failure to do. The verse which follows in Matt 7:24-27 continues the instruction that hearing and doing are both essential. "Watch, therefore" in verse 13, is the alert, not so much looking for the coming one, more the need to be ready when he calls, see Rev 3:2. Procrastination is the thief of opportunity as well as time. "Ye know not the day nor the hour of his coming" which applies to us today. The parable gives a picture of what will be attained when the Lord comes. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to the ten virgins.

To all who are related to divine things such a preview gives an urgency to command, to watch for the most important lesson "they that were ready went with him into the marriage."