

Five Foolish Virgins

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In the 25th chapter of Matthew, Christ gave a parable that might seem self-explanatory. However, according to Christ's definition of a parable, this probably is not the case.

And the disciples came and said to him (Christ), 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' ¹¹ He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you (Christ's true servants) to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them (everyone else) it has not been given.' (Mt. 13:10-11; Ed. notes in parentheses; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Christ's statement does not mean everyone else will remain ignorant about God's truth forever. However, there is an order in which Almighty God calls people to understand His truth, but the numbers are small in any given generation (cf. Mt. 20:16; 22:14). This order is pictured by the three annual Holy Day periods that mankind is supposed to observe (see study: Abel Observed God's Appointed Festival). Most importantly, it is Almighty God's ultimate desire that everyone understand His truth either in this lifetime or following the second resurrection (cf. Rev. 20:5-6; Jn. 5:29; Heb. 11:35), and then willingly repent of the sins they have committed.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise (of Christ's return; cf. vs. 4), as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you, **not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance** (2Pet. 3:9; cf. 2Sam. 14:14; Jn. 6:40; Ed. note in parentheses; emphasis added).

With this brief background about the purpose of Christ's parables, some symbolic and figurative aspects of the parable in the 25th chapter of Matthew will be examined because they are a

key to better understanding what Christ was revealing.

To begin with, the meaning of the word "virgin" needs to be understood from God's perspective, which is first and foremost spiritual, not physical.

There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman (virgin) cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit... (1Cor. 7:34a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

It is in this state of "caring about the things of the Lord" that the apostle Paul wanted the church to remain, and he used the term "virgin" to describe this.

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you (church members in Corinth) as **a chaste virgin** to Christ (2Cor. 11:2; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Therefore, the ten virgins mentioned in Matthew 25:1 represent those who "care about the things of the Lord". However, no two individuals have exactly the same level of care and concern because everyone is different, and people can change over time. This is revealed by verse 2 because five of these virgins are described as "foolish." For half of them to get to this state, there must have been some other influence affecting their lives and the apostle Paul gives an indication of what, or who, this might be.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the **simplicity** (SGD 572; free from hypocrisy; not self-seeking; singleness of purpose; sincerity; honesty; generosity) that is in Christ (2Cor. 11:3; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

To examine what occurred in the lives of these foolish virgins, God's definition of "foolish" must be examined. The following scriptures confirm that they got to the point of despising God's wisdom and instruction. As a result of this attitude, they no longer acknowledged their errors. At this point, they refused to accept any further correction.

... fools despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1:7b).

Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him (Prov. 27:22).

Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and **foolish king who will be admonished** (warned; corrected) **no more** (Eccl. 4:3; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Now everyone who hears these sayings of mine (Christ), and does **not** do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand (Mt. 7:26; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

This refusal to accept correction when error is exposed can easily lead to various expressions of pride and vanity. God defines this as another characteristic of foolishness.

If you have been foolish in exalting yourself, or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth (Prov. 30:32; emphasis added).

Pride is usually closely connected to self-righteousness, which can become a stumbling block as well. This stems from a number of erroneous beliefs. One of these is that by performing certain "good works" a person should be regarded more highly than others, and any "irregularities" in their words or actions excused, and even justified. Another erroneous

belief is that someone's higher position in society is a confirmation of their superior character or ability. Another error is related to entitlement due to inheriting a position based on birth from a noble lineage (Mt. 3:9; Lk. 3:8). Because of these, and other errors, a self-righteous attitude can develop making it very difficult to acknowledge that everyone is guilty of sin and therefore equal in God's eyes (Rom. 3:23; 5:12). The religious leaders during the time of Christ's ministry exhibited these attitudes in abundance, which is the reason he referred to them as "fools and blind" (Mt. 23:1-35).



... FOOLS DESPISE WISDOM AND
INSTRUCTION.
Proverbs 1:7b

The apostle Paul noticed church members in Galatia being affected by the self-righteous attitudes of the Jewish religious leaders who taught that circumcision was the means by which someone could be justified before God. These false teachers were claiming that no one should consider themselves part of the Body of Christ unless they are physically circumcised first.

O **foolish** Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the (Holy) Spirit by the works of the law (animal sacrifices, circumcision, ceremonial washings), or by the hearing of faith (about Christ's role in every sinner's restoration)? ³ Are you so **foolish?** Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh (performing animal sacrifices, circumcision, ceremonial washings (Gal. 3:1-3; **cf. Gal. 5:1-6**; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Although this form of self-righteousness was prevalent in first century Jewish religious leaders, there is another form of this foolishness extant today in Christianity. It is the belief that a Christian is justified before God if they perform certain "good deeds" or recites "the sinner's prayer" and goes to church regularly, or leads a basically decent life, because they believe they are saved "by faith alone", irrespective of whether they obey God's law and commandments. This false teaching is contrary to many statements Christ made on this subject.

But if you want to enter life (everlasting), **keep the commandments** (Mt. 19:17b; emphasis added).

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!**' (Mt. 7:21-23; cf. **1Jn. 3:4; 2Tim. 2:19**; emphasis added).

Even those who continue to obey God's law and commandments, to the best of their ability, are not justified by their "deeds". Instead, they have only done what was expected of them.

So likewise you, when you have done all those things **which you are commanded**, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. **We have done what was our duty to do**' (Lk. 17:10; emphasis added).

Sadly, the foolish can become complacent about their deteriorating condition, which only compounds the problem.

...the complacency of fools will destroy them (Prov. 1:32b; emphasis added).

Although five of the virgins are described as foolish, they were not always in this condition. There was a time when they represented noble characteristics like generosity, to the extent that they would give and serve spontaneously and willingly, as opposed to grudgingly.

The foolish person will no longer be called generous, nor the miser said to be bountiful (Isa. 32:5).



BUT IF YOU WANT TO ENTER LIFE (EVERLASTING), KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.

Matthew 19:17b; emphasis added

This miserly attitude can lead to negativity toward God as well as others who are trying to serve Him. If not repented of, it can result in sin if foolish people accuse God of being unfair or evil.

For the foolish person will speak foolishness and **his heart will work iniquity: to practice ungodliness to utter error against the Lord...** (Isa. 32:6a; emphasis added).

Looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; **lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled** (Heb. 12:15; emphasis added).

Anger toward God, as well as other people, is likely to occur within those who harbor negative attitudes,

For anger rests in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7:9b; emphasis added).

This is a sad scenario because the five foolish virgins were previously in a position where they could assist those who were hungry to learn more about God's way of living, but at some point, they withdrew from helping those who wanted to be fed with God's truth. These foolish virgins were even willing to lie if necessary to justify their position.

(The foolish person keeps) the hungry unsatisfied and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail (cf. Mt. 25:35).⁷ Also the schemes of the schemer are evil; he devises wicked plans to destroy the poor with **lying words**, even when the needy speaks justice (Isa. 32:6b – 7; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).



**FOR THE COMMANDMENT IS A LAMP,
AND THE LAW IS LIGHT...**

Proverbs 6:23a; emphasis added

It's at this low point in Christ's parable that the five foolish virgins realize how poor their relationship with God is, and this is pictured figuratively using lamps and oil.

And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for **our lamps are going out.**' (Mt. 25:8; emphasis added).

This same figurative language is used in the writings of the First Covenant.

There is desirable treasure, and **oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man squanders it** (Prov. 21:20; emphasis added).

Therefore, the five foolish virgins gradually squandered the oil they previously had, and it got so low that it was virtually quenched. This oil can be viewed from a physical perspective, but that does not fit the context of Christ's parable, nor does it fit other parables dealing with similar

subjects. For example, Christ used the word "lamp" and "light" to describe the work of God's servants.

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven (Mt. 5:14-16).

So, Christ used a physical lamp to illustrate the positive effect that God's true servants can have on others through their words and actions. After all they are to represent Him, which includes teaching the importance of obeying His law and commandments.

For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light... (Prov. 6:23a; emphasis added).

However, without oil in their lamps, the five foolish virgins were not able to fulfill the job they were given. Based on Biblical references involving oil, it was used for various purposes including the anointing of various officials (Ex. 30:23-30; 1Sam. 10:1), fuel for lamps (Lev. 24:2), a healing agent for wounds (Lk. 10:34) and sprinkled on whatever objects God wanted set apart for holy use (Ex. 40:9; Lev. 8:10; 12; 30). Oil was also used to cleanse someone from any sin they may have committed.

And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of the right ear of him **who is to be cleansed...** (Lev. 14:17a; cf. vs 28; emphasis added).

Christ's apostles used oil to identify the action of God's Holy Spirit in the healing of those who had sicknesses and other serious issues.

And they cast out many demons, and **anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them** (Mk. 6:13; emphasis added).

This connection of God's Holy Spirit, with oil being used to heal, has deep spiritual significance because Christ stated he came to heal those who were sinners.

... Those who (believe they) are well (righteous) have no need of a physician, but those who are sick (realize they are sinners) (Mt. 9:12b; Ed. notes in parentheses).

...For I (Christ) did not come to call the righteous, but sinners (the sick), to repentance (Mt.9:13b; Ed. notes in parentheses).



DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT

I Thessalonians 5:19; emphasis added

Therefore every sinner, who repents and is subsequently baptized, will be healed from their sins and anointed with the gift of God's Holy Spirit (cf. Ac. 2:38). After baptism, they are to begin living a new life which includes growing in their understanding of God's will (Rom. 6:1-4; 2Pet. 3:18). In the case of the five foolish virgins, this process began to break down at some point. Consequently, the oil, associated" figuratively" with their original anointing at baptism, was running out due to neglect.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed (all the more careful attention) to the things we have heard, **lest we drift away**.² For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward (penalty),³ **how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation....** (Heb. 2:1-3a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Over the course of time, anyone who has God's Holy Spirit can "quench" or extinguish it. This quenching was pictured figuratively by the oil that was almost gone from the lamps that the five foolish virgins were carrying.

Do not quench the Spirit (1Thes. 5:19; emphasis added).

As discussed previously, foolish individuals are identified by specific things they are doing which are contrary to God's will. Nonetheless, they always have the opportunity to repent and continue serving God. However, the five foolish virgins appear to be neglecting this, and are on a downward spiral of compounding their errors. In the context of being a "chaste virgin", the apostle Paul warned members in the church at Corinth not to succumb to false teachings about who Christ really was and the message he brought to mankind.

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we (the apostles of Christ) have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received (cf. Eph. 2:2b), or a different gospel which you have not (previously) accepted, you may well put up with it (2Cor. 11:4; cf. Gal. 1:6-9; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Paul was warning against the very thing that has now occurred, which is... "the teachings of Christ's apostles have been altered to the point where obedience to God's 'every word' is no longer required (Mt. 4:4)". This is why it is so important to remain vigilant for those seeking to serve Almighty God (1Pet. 5:8). This is the main reason for the parable about the five foolish virgins. Because of complacency and neglect, half the virgins were open to errors in judgment and reasoning, which brought them to the point of quenching God's Holy Spirit.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits, whether they are of God**; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1Jn. 4:1; emphasis added).

In conclusion, Almighty God does not use the word "foolish" indiscriminately. Instead, He uses it to describe specific traits that can lead to serious problems. For those seeking to obey Him, it is imperative that they examine themselves to make sure none of the traits covered in this study are taking root in their lives (1Cor. 11:31-32), as this can lead to one's "lamp running out of oil". Individuals in this condition will not be ready for the Marriage Supper at Christ's return (Rev. 19:6-9).

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