

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³ The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴ The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵ The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶ “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

⁷ “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

⁹ “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰ “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹ “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

¹² “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

¹³ “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1. Do some research, find out what you can about the wedding customs of Jesus’ day.**
- 2. Why were there ten virgins waiting along the way for the bridegroom?**
- 3. What distinguishes the five wise from the five foolish virgins?**
- 4. Why did the wise ones not share their extra oil with the foolish ones? What then did the wise ones tell the foolish ones to do?**
- 5. What happens to the foolish virgins?**
- 6. What does Jesus offer as the lesson of the parable?**
- 7. Why does Jesus share this parable, what question is he answering? (Matthew 24:3)**
- 8. This parable is an allegory, what do the characters and events represent? The bridegroom, the wise virgins, the foolish virgins, the oil, the banquet.**
- 9. What is the warning that this parable offers its readers by Jesus?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How would this parable have spoken to people in Jesus’ day? In the days of the Matthean early Church? To believers today?

Here we have another wedding parable that seems to put guests at what appears to be an unfair disadvantage. In another parable, a guest is ejected from the banquet for not wearing the proper wedding garb when the parable tells us that he or she was swept off the street at the last minute to fill the wedding hall. In this parable, some of the guests are refused entry because they ran out of oil for their lamps because the bridegroom was late, it was not their fault that he was tardy in his expected arrival. How do we justify such treatment of these guests? What is Jesus’ point?