

[R38 : page 3]

## "The Ten Virgins."

Many of our readers are more or less familiar with the application of the parable of the ten virgins (Matth. 25), to a movement in this last generation in reference to the Lord's coming. For such readers especially this article is prepared, and we ask for its suggestions your careful and prayerful attention. This is specially important now, because some of what has been considered the well-established features of the parable, are being discarded by some of our brethren, and a new departure is by them being made. We do not object to changing our opinions, on any subject, or discarding former applications of prophecy, or any other scripture, when we see a good reason for the change, – in fact, it is as important that we should be willing to unlearn errors and mere traditions, as to learn truth. The removal of error is as clearing the rubbish from the surface that the beautiful verdure may appear. But we should be careful in our anxiety to get rid of error, or to build up a new theory, that we do not throw away any truth. It is our duty to "Prove all things," – by the unerring word, – "and hold fast that which is good."

It is confidently predicted that we will discard the whole application, but we see no reason for so doing. Such a thought as the possibility of giving up the general correctness of the application [R39 : page 3] was first suggested by the prediction itself, and we cannot avoid regarding such prediction as an effort to cause such a change and so fulfill an imaginary prophecy. It is not so easy to tell what men will do, as to tell what they have done; (even prophecy cannot be understood in detail until it is fulfilled:) and we are sure that those who have made and accepted the prediction are further now from the old application than we are. This will be apparent presently to all who

understand the former application, and the new position taken, and who are free enough from bondage to accept the truth as from the Lord, irrespective of the vessel in which it is conveyed.

To appreciate the strength of the former application, we must see the place or time in the gospel dispensation, where the parable belongs, and to appreciate the weakness of the new departure it is necessary to see the parallelism of the Jewish and Gospel dispensations. The chart on which that beautiful bible argument is illustrated hangs before me as I write. We regard it as a clear, simple and strong definite time argument. From the death of Jacob to the death of Christ, – 1845 years, – is the measure of the first or twelve tribe dispensation. From the death of Christ in the Spring of A.D. 33, until the Spring of A.D. 1878, is the measure of the second – another period of 1845 years. The two dispensations are equal in length, the second beginning where the first ends, at the cross, or death of Christ. That was the meeting place or point of reconciliation between God and man, – "reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" – Rom. 5:10. Hence Christ is our "Mercy Seat." The two cherubim made "of one measure and one size" (1 Kings 6:25) placed with wings extended on either side of the mercy seat, illustrate the equality of the two dispensations. Types are exact, for being a feature of the law, they must be fulfilled even to the jots and tittles, hence though in some respects the dispensations lap, there is a feature in which they do not lap, or that part of the law would not be a perfect shadow.

The wonderful equality in the substance of these dispensations as well as in various measures is familiar to you. From the death of Jacob to the birth of Christ is equal to the period from the death of Christ to the Autumn of A.D. 1844, each being 1811½ years. Each of these points was marked by an important event in reference to the coming of the Lord.

The tarrying of Jesus for 30 years before his baptism and entrance on the harvest work, has its parallel in the tarrying time between 1844 and 1874, at which later point the harvest of the gospel dispensation began. Christ's personal ministry of 3½ years, ending at his death, has its parallel in the 3½ years of harvest from the Autumn of 1874 until the Spring of 1878.

At his birth Christ came in the body prepared for sacrifice, tarried thirty years, and came as Bridegroom and Reaper, and three years and a half later he rode into Jerusalem as a King. The closing work of that dispensation completed the pattern. All the Jewish dispensation with its closing work, under the supervision of Jesus in the flesh, was a pattern of the gospel dispensation and its closing work under the supervision of Christ in the spiritual body. That was a fleshly dispensation for the development of the typical seed, and was the period of Jewish favor, while this has been the dispensation of the Spirit for the development of the Gospel church, the true seed, and God has during this latter half shown the Jews no favor as a nation.

The Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1878, made about the time of the Berlin Congress, securing certain legal favors to the Jews, opening the door for their restoration, is certainly in harmony with the application, and we are not ashamed of our rejoicing at its confirmation. We regard this whole affair as a remarkable confirmation of the truth of bible prophecies, and of the gospel of Christ.

No one who is at all familiar with **[R39 : page 4]** this argument, can fail to see that whatever tends to weaken or set aside the parallelism, weakens the whole position. As the former closed with its three stages of the coming of Jesus, so this one closes with three stages. In 1844 he was due to leave the most holy place. (I write for those who, by virtue of the past education have eyes to see or ears to hear.) He was expected to come to earth, and to do a great many things that were not due, by those who had not learned that the law, which was a

shadow, required that the High Priest should tarry in the holy place to cleanse it (the sanctuary means the holy place,) after he had done his work in the most holy and left it. (See Lev. 16.) That the tarrying was thirty years or from 1844 until 1874 has often been shown. This position as you know was not taken to make it a parallel to the thirty years tarrying at the first Advent, but was based on the Jubilee argument, and the days of Daniel 12, but after having seen the arguments, proving that the Bridegroom was due then, then it was found that the two tarrying times like all the rest were parallel. Man did not make the parallels, but with the Lord's help found them. Thus then they stand related to each other; – at the end of the Jewish dispensation Christ came first as a babe, second as Bridegroom and Reaper, and third as a King; at this time, and points of time exactly corresponding, Christ first came from the Most Holy, and tarried in the Holy place, second as Bridegroom and Reaper, and third, as King.

What he did at first was necessary to complete the pattern, and what he did at the second, was necessary to complete the parallel. You have seen how the Parable of the Ten Virgins belongs in the closing of the Gospel dispensation; and how clearly the various parts of the parallel fit the points of time above mentioned.

The movement is a representative one. Not all the church, no not all living christians "took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom," but it was an important movement in the church, and ended in disappointment in 1844. "Whilst the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept." Observe how closely the tarrying time of the parable fits the time for the tarrying in the holy place, as indicated by the prophetic periods. The night of the parable and its tarrying time are identical, ending when the Bridegroom comes.

That Christ has other offices than Bridegroom is true, and we have learned that he comes at different stages or turns, in harmony with his different offices, but be it observed that the coming in this

parable is his coming in the character of the Bridegroom, and so far as this parable shows, the tarrying was the tarrying of the Bridegroom.

The tarrying of the parable ends where the Bridegroom of the parable comes. His presence in the character of the Bridegroom is what puts an end to the tarrying. His presence makes it morning. The cry made at midnight of the parable points to the morning of the parable, and could not properly continue after the tarrying had ended by the only way it could end, the coming of the Bridegroom.

All who understand the arguments, admit that the tarrying of the parable began in 1844, and ended in 1874, and it has always been urged in favor of the cry which pointed to 1874, for the coming of the Bridegroom, being the "midnight cry," because it began at midnight, – 1859 – which is a very consistent reason.

But whether or not it was the midnight cry of the parable depends on whether it was true or not, or in other words, whether or not the Bridegroom came in 1874. It will not do to say Christ came in another character in 1874, no other character but that of the Bridegroom would meet the conditions of the parable. And if the coming of the Bridegroom is yet future, then the tarrying of the parable is not ended, the morning of the parable is not come, and that cry in such a case was not the midnight cry, for two reasons, either of which would kill its claim: it was not made at midnight, and the Bridegroom did not come according to the cry. Now it is all right to give up a position when one finds out he is wrong, but it is neither consistent nor right to claim that the tarrying ended in 1874, and thus prove that 1859 was midnight, and yet for some other reason claim that the coming of the Bridegroom is yet, and may be many years future. Convince me that the "coming" of that parable is future, and I will try to do what it seems every honest and consistent man would do, viz: admit the tarrying is not ended, and therefore the cry we are talking of was not the true midnight cry..

Now brethren, all who can hear me, I want it clearly understood that I have not given up the application of the parable, and can see no sufficient reason for so doing. I believe the going forth ended in 1844, that the tarrying ended in 1874, and therefore the cry pointing to 1874 was the midnight cry, and I believe it was consistent that the name "midnight cry" then disappeared from the publication, because, as stated at the time, it had done its work; but in harmony with that faith I also believe that Christ came in the character of a Bridegroom in 1874.

That John introduced Christ in that character at the beginning of the Jewish harvest, to complete the pattern (John 3:29), is to us an additional evidence of the position that the parallel was due in 1874 at the beginning of the gospel harvest. It does not militate against this as a part of the pattern because it may not have appeared in any of the publications on this subject; truth is our heritage from Father, no matter by whom it comes, and each part of the plan is strengthened after it has past. It has troubled some to accept the legitimate conclusion of the midnight cry arguments because they did not understand the manner of Christ's movements, and because it was supposed that going in to the marriage meant translation. We are not translated, and therefore the coming of the Bridegroom must be future, is the substance of the thought [R40 : page 4] in many minds. But for a long time (ever since the Spring of 1875), it has been a matter of surprise to some of us that any of us ever thought going in to the marriage in that parable was translation. Not a word is said in it about the Bride, nor the consummation of a marriage, nor of translation, but it all evidently relates to a double movement of a part of the church before the marriage takes place.

The "going forth" before the slumbering was not a literal movement from one place to another, but an act of faith, and the "going out" under the midnight cry was also an act of faith, why then should

the "going in" be a literal transfer. We believe (as has been expressed in an article on the subject) that the virgins are guests by faith, i.e. by being in the light at a certain stage of development.

Of this more anon, but it must appear evident to many that going in may have been in process from 1874, if going out required years for fulfillment. We suggest that the readiness of the parable consists in the ability, by the Spirit and the Truth, to receive him, during his presence as the Bridegroom, before the marriage is due, just as all who believed Moses and were taught of God were able to receive him when he was present in the flesh. (Compare Jno. 5:45-47 and chap. 6:44-45.)

It is admitted by some that going into the marriage is not translation, but there is a special reason in their minds for placing that going in yet in the future, and the coming of the Bridegroom, also in the future, even though they teach as do we that the tarrying time ended in 1874. That special reason is the basis of the new departure we have mentioned. Since the Autumn of 1878, there has been a very clearly marked difference of opinion on the subjects of Atonement, Resurrection and Restitution. While we have not felt disposed to disfellowship anyone on account of a difference of opinion on these things, or for any other opinion as long as we are satisfied of the christian integrity of brethren, there has been difference enough to prevent the same hearty co-operation as formerly, especially as there has been manifested a disposition to urge these disputed points as test questions. Paul and Barnabas separated in their work for a reason not half so important, but Christ was not divided, and we do not read of either one calling each other hard names or disfellowshipping each other as Christians. But the effort is now put forth to create a division before the Bridegroom comes (which is supposed by them to be future) such as will justify the claim that we are the "Foolish Virgins" of the parable. Now this would not hurt our feelings as much as it would

some others, even if it were true, for we believe with some of our brethren that are seeking to make this new application that the loss of the "foolish" is temporal and not eternal, or at least, that in due time they will, when fitted, find an appropriate place in the kingdom. But we are sorry to see the straining of some clear applications of scripture to make this new application. It is not what we have said, but what it is supposed we will say that gives even a shadow of a reason for this new application. "But here is a division," say they, "and as there is a division among the virgins before the Bridegroom comes, this must be it." Wait, brethren, suppose this is the division of that parable, are you sure you are on the side of the "wise"? We might imagine as you have concerning us, that you some time will give up the whole application and confess that your lamps have gone out. If there were to be no trial, or shaking, inspection of guests, and casting out of some who did not have on a "wedding garment," AFTER the Bridegroom comes, and the servants were assembled for the wedding (Matt. 22:10-14) there might be a little show of reason for thinking this division to be the division of that parable; but let it be borne in mind that the midnight cry, the waking up, trimming of lamps, confession of lack and seeking for oil, all takes place before the tarrying time ends "For while they went to buy the Bridegroom came," &c. And it cannot be reasonably claimed that the tarrying ended before the Bridegroom came.

If that movement from 1859 until 1874, or if you will, to 1878 was the midnight cry movement, then we certainly are not the foolish virgins of that parable, for we had all the light the cry gave, and we obeyed it too, as is admitted, but there is not a ray of evidence that the foolish virgins went out to meet the bridegroom under the midnight cry. The want of light prevented them from having any place in that procession, and so instead of being ready to meet him, their attention was given in another direction entirely, as is stated in the parable itself. Was not the light in the 1844 movement in reference to the Lord's coming? Does not the analogy of the movement require that the light,



in that part of the movement which ends with the coming of the Bridegroom, should relate to that coming? It certainly seems so, and that there should be a change in the kind of light in the middle of the second movement seems far fetched. It cannot be claimed that the second movement ends before the Bridegroom comes.

There were some whose attention was called by the midnight cry, who, on examination could not find such light in their bibles, and yet they wanted to have light on the Lord's coming. And while those who could see the light under the midnight cry, were obeying it in looking for the [R40 : page 5] Bridegroom, they were away in the mazes of the "Eastern Question," and in some cases were expecting a direct voice from Heaven to give them what we could see in the prophetic periods, viz: the time for the coming of the Bridegroom. I wonder who among those who are making this new application, and say they have as much confidence in it as in any part of the application, will be honorable enough to confess as publicly as the former application was made that they were mistaken? "We thought that was light, we thought the Lord led us into it, but we were mistaken, and it was all darkness." Certainly if one position is light the other must be darkness. Does the Lord lead his people in opposite directions? Would it not be wise to be less dogmatic, and less severe with those who cannot see as we do? We may all safely learn a lesson from this sad affair. Those who have advanced light can afford to be patient. I hope no one will infer from what is said above that we think that all who were interested in the "Eastern Question" are represented by the Foolish Virgins. Thousands of Christians never heard the midnight cry, and only those who heard it could either obey it or disobey it. The "wise" represent those who heard it and obeyed the cry. The foolish represent those who heard it and for want of sufficient light could not obey the cry.

No one can read the parable, and draw from it the idea that the foolish and wise alike hear and obey the cry, and yet this is what is now claimed by the new application.

This seems to us like drawing largely on the imagination, and savors of a lawyer making up a bad case. When the midnight cry is ended, the light needed in order to obey it has done its work, and that is all the light the parable says anything about. It is now evident that the going in of the parable is not the end of the christian journey, for his journey will not end until he is translated. After the going in, comes the inspection of the guests, followed by a casting out of one at least who has not the "wedding garment." This is a subject worthy of present consideration, and is receiving attention by both sides of this supposed division. Some say the wedding garment is a pure theology, i.e. – a right theory of God's plan. We believe that the right theory is not to be despised, but it is a false theory that teaches that theory alone is needed. To obey the truth is certainly as necessary as it is to have the truth. We believe the "wedding garment" is character, – the highest expression of the greatest effect produced in us by the faith and love of Christ.

And we venture the assertion that none who have a deep spiritual experience will fail to see the difference between his faith in Christ, and his theory of God's plan.

The fact that this subject of the wedding garment is now agitated, and especially since the Spring of 1878, is to us significant. We regard it as one of the circumstantial evidences that it is due here, and that the midnight cry movement is past as is the cry itself.

The correctness of either theory of what the wedding garment is, is yet to be tested. Each theory will stand or fall on its own merits, and should not be confounded with the light of the parable of the ten virgins that relates exclusively to the coming of the Bridegroom.

Our theory being right will not prove that we have the wedding garment, and I am satisfied that some of our brethren are nearer right than their theory is.

We do not wish any one to think that we are judging those who accept of some wrong idea of Atonement and Restitution, as being without the wedding garment. We believe this to be a time of peculiar trial of faith, – that we are in a riddle, and are getting a terrible shaking; and we are fully convinced that all who HAVE not the wedding garment ON will go through the riddle, no matter how correct their theory about it may be.

We regard the object of a test as partly to prove what we are, and at the same time to develop strength. A tree that can stand the storm is made stronger by it, sending its roots deeper and taking a stronger hold. Oh, that all who being in Christ, and subjected to this strange ("think it not strange") trial, may become "rooted and grounded in love," avoiding the "works of the flesh" – "flesh spots" – for a description of which see Gal. 5:19-21 – and bearing the "fruits of the Spirit" which are not a perfect theory, but, "Love, joy, peace, longsufferings, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance," and so ripen into the character of our Head, and be prepared for the "glory soon to be revealed."

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