

WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

– MATTHEW 25:1-13. – OCTOBER 14. –

"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

PROBABLY on the last Sunday of his earthly ministry our Lord foretold the destruction at Jerusalem, the scattering of his followers, a long period of wars, rumors of wars, etc., and finally his second coming, as recorded in Matthew, 25th chapter. This information was most appropriate to the apostles at this very time, for their expectation had run in a different direction – they had been expecting the exaltation of the Lord as the Messiah, and that Jerusalem would be the seat of his empire. They had asked, When shall these things be? and, What shall be the sign of thy presence? and Jesus, in his great prophecy of Matthew 24, had explained these matters, indicating to them that his second coming would be in strenuous times, when, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived – in which, as it was in the days of Noah, so it would then be in the days of the Son of Man, that the multitude of the world would be eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, and be unaware of the storm impending and the consummation of the age preparatory to the beginning of the new age, of his Kingdom.

To impress the matter upon their minds, he gave the parable of the ten virgins – five wise and five foolish. The scene of the parable is laid near to the close of the Gospel age, as is indicated by its opening statement, "**Then** shall the Kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom." The parable has not been applicable all the way down through the Gospel age, but to our understanding is applicable now, because we are living in the end of the age, at the time when the Bridegroom will be present – at the time when

the wise virgins will go in to the wedding and the foolish will be excluded. The understanding of this parable at the present time, therefore, should be meat in due season to all who are the Lord's true followers.

Throughout the Scriptures the Church is represented [R3867 : page 313] as a Bride in preparation for her marriage. The Bridegroom uniformly is the Lord Jesus, to whom belongs the entire inheritance, and the opportunity granted to the Lord's followers in the present time is that of becoming his Bride and joint-heirs. They have no status or relationship to the King eternal except as they obtain it by union with the King's Son. The type of this in the Old Testament is a very beautiful one: Abraham typified the Heavenly Father, very rich; Isaac typified our Lord Jesus, the seed of promise, the heir of all; Abraham's servant, sent to call a wife for Isaac, beautifully typified the holy Spirit, which, during this Gospel age, has been selecting the Church, of which the Apostle says, I have espoused you as a chaste virgin unto one husband, which is Christ. – 2 Cor. 11:2.

Throughout the Gospel age this Church, under the guidance and protection of the holy Spirit, has been approaching the Father's house of many mansions, the heavenly Kingdom, the glorious conditions promised in joint-heirship with the Bridegroom. If we rightly understand the matter we are now at the end of the journey, and the Bride class, typified by Rebecca, is putting on the vail and alighting from the camel and being received by the heavenly Bridegroom. As the entire matter has occupied a long period of nearly nineteen centuries, so the coming features are occupying several years for their accomplishment. Soon the Bride will be with the Bridegroom and in the Sarah tent – joint-heirs with him in the Abrahamic Covenant. It is in harmony with this that the Apostle assures us that "if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." – Gal. 3:29.

Several of the Lord's parables related to this marriage of the King's Son, and his last message to the Church tells us of how ultimately the Bride, the Lamb's wife, shall shine forth resplendent in the Kingdom, and she is symbolized by the New Jerusalem. The announcement is there made, too, of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb after the Bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7-9.) John the Baptist as a prophet referred to this relationship between Christ and the Church, saying, "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom when he heareth his voice rejoiceth greatly. This my joy is fulfilled." John realized that he was **[R3868 : page 313]** neither a member of the Bride class nor was he the Bridegroom. He recognized Jesus as the Bridegroom, and was glad to be honored of God as the servant of the Bridegroom and Bride to give the introduction. The high position John will occupy in the future, as one of the faithful prophets of whom our Lord said there was none greater, is assured; but we have the Lord's assurance that the least one, the humblest one in the Bride class of this Gospel age, the least one in this Kingdom class, will be greater than John the Baptist, because these are to be joint-heirs in the Kingdom, partakers of the glory, honor, immortality, while John and the faithful of the past will be upon the earth plane as representatives and princes of the Kingdom amongst men. – Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:39,40; Psa. 45:16.

TWO CLASSES OF VIRGINS

Having the parable then located before our minds as belonging somewhere about the present time, we note the fact that it refers only to virgins – pure ones. The parable does not refer to the world at all, nor even to nominal Church people. Both of its classes represent Christians, the Kingdom of heaven class, believers, consecrated believers, believers who have heard the Gospel of the Kingdom, who are expecting the King at his second advent and who have lamps, and who get from their lamps light,

information and instruction. These two classes of pure ones, separate from the world, informed respecting the Bridegroom's coming and Kingdom and waiting for them, represent the two classes of the consecrated – the "Little Flock" and the "Great Company," the "more than conquerors" and the conquerors "through great tribulation." (Rom. 8:37; Rev. 7:14.) These are the same two classes that are represented in the Tabernacle type by the two goats, one of which became the Lord's goat for the sacrifice and the other the scapegoat, only that in the Tabernacle type the goats represented the two classes all the way down through the Gospel age as well as particularly at its close, while the two classes in the parable under consideration represent the Church only in the present time in the end of this age.

Evidently the Lord's object in giving the parable was two-fold: first, to give a salutary lesson to the apostles and the entire Church of this Gospel age on the necessity for alertness, watching and praying, anticipating and preparing for the coming King and his Kingdom that they might be constantly ready for a share therein. Second, the parable was specially intended for us living in this time, to let us see that it would not be sufficient to be hoping and praying for the Kingdom and in a general way expecting the Bridegroom, but that we must be so alert and so full of enthusiasm for the event that it would lead us to make the wisest possible preparation for it, that we might not be disappointed at the final moment.

SECOND ADVENTISTS IN THE PARABLE

True to the picture of the parable, a movement took place amongst the Lord's people of all denominations in the last century, which culminated in what was known as the Second Advent movement. The virgins, the pure ones amongst Christians all over the world, were aroused with the thought that the coming of the Bridegroom was near, and a general lamp trimming, a

general investigation of the Bible especially on that subject resulted. True to the parable, the expectation of those dear people was disappointed – "the Bridegroom tarried," and while he tarried "they all slumbered and slept." The lamps were measurably neglected and a general stupor fell upon this class. Indeed we may properly enough agree that many of the virgins not only slept but dreamed most peculiar, fantastic and unreasonable things. But by and by came the midnight announcement, "Behold the Bridegroom!"

This cry has been going forth ever since A.D. 1874, and in response to it all of the virgin class everywhere are awakening and a fresh examination of the divine Word is in progress, the lamps are being trimmed. Amongst those who hear the announcement are some who insist that it is a false cry: they have become so drowsy, so overcharged with the cares of this life, so comfortably nestled, that although they love the Bridegroom and desire above all things to be ready to receive him, they are unprepared, refuse to investigate, and merely murmur to themselves, "Yes, we love the Bridegroom, we will surely be ready to receive him, we have [R3868 : page 314] long been waiting for him, but not yet, not yet. Soul, take thine ease; no one knows anything about the matter; those who are announcing the Bridegroom are surely in error."

As days and weeks and years roll by more and more of the virgins awaken, and as they do so the investigation begins, the trimming of the lamps. Then it is discovered that some, who thought they were ready to enter into the joys of their Lord, find that they are deficient in the all-important oil, which represents the holy Spirit, and from which alone comes their enlightenment. The delay of the Bridegroom thus serves as a test to the virgins invited to go in with him to the marriage – the delay serves to prove who are the wise and who are the foolish. A certain amount of oil, a certain amount of consecration, a certain amount of the

holy Spirit, was necessary to be counted in with the virgins at any stage; but a larger measure is necessary now in the time of the actual presence of the Bridegroom, in the time of actual joining in the procession – more truth, more light, are now due, and must be possessed by those who would go in to the wedding.

The virgins merely represent the Lord's people in general at this time, so that many are now amongst them who had nothing to do with the Adventist movement of 1844. However, the general spirit must be the same, love for the Bridegroom, expectancy of his presence in the Kingdom and a desire above all things to be prepared to enter in with him before the door is shut. The question now then is, Who has a sufficiency of oil, of light, of the holy Spirit, from which this illumination proceeds, to be able to stand in the procession of the virgins who will enter in with the Bridegroom before the door closes? It is an important question, and one which appeals to every one who has his lamp burning. How necessary that we see to it that we have a good supply of the Spirit of the Lord – the spirit of meekness, patience, gentleness, long suffering, brotherly kindness, love. We may be sure that unless we have a good supply of these our lamps will go out.

"GIVE US OF YOUR OIL"

To illustrate this holy Spirit, this spirit of consecration which all of the wise virgins must have in full measure in order to maintain their light and their place in the Bridegroom's favor and to gain an entrance to the marriage, the Lord in the parable represents the foolish virgins as asking the wise for some of their oil, and then shows the impossibility of its being thus obtained from one another. The fruits and graces of the holy Spirit cannot be had for the asking; they must be bought in the market of experience – they are of gradual growth and cost painstaking care of words and thoughts and doings. It is because these fruits of the

Spirit are so difficult of attainment and cost such a price of self-sacrifice and sacrifice of worldly interests that they are valuable in the Lord's sight.

None can get too much of this holy Spirit, none can secure an over supply for his own use so that he could supply others from his abundance. The Bridegroom has made in advance abundant provision by which all those who are invited to go in with him to the marriage may be properly equipped, not only with robes and lamps, but also with the oil; and if any are careless in the procurement of the oil, they thus indicate their unfitness to be of the class who are to enter with the Bridegroom before the door is shut. This is the essence of the Lord's instruction by this parable – that those who hope to enter into the Kingdom and share its glories with him must expect to make preparation in advance. If they wait until the moment for the door to close, however willing they may be, however anxious, they will not be prepared – the preparation requires time, patience, care.

We meet continually those who give evidence of being true Christians, "virgins," pure of heart, of intention, who are considerably interested in the heavenly Bridegroom, in the gathering for the marriage supper, but who have little light upon these interesting subjects. They sometimes say to us, "Give us of your light, tell us how you know these things, why you feel so sure about them while others are asleep. We are awake enough, but our lamps give no light." We answer that it is impossible to give them faith in these things by proxy; that there is only one way to obtain the light, and that is through a patient, persevering study of the divine Word under the guidance of the holy Spirit. We inform them that patient perseverance in well doing, in Scriptural study, in cultivating the fruits and graces of the Spirit, are necessary in order to have this oil and its light. They express regret, for they are so overcharged with the cares of this life or the deceitfulness of riches, or family pride, or what not, that they

have not the time to give to their spiritual development and the study of the Word. We are sorry and disappointed at such; we would that they could enjoy with us the blessings of a good supply of oil and the clear light of our lamps as they are now shining. We can do no more than tell them how and where the oil, the light, must be obtained. We must go on in our personal preparation and in our hastening to hold up our lights in our salutation of the Bridegroom, and expressions of joy in connection with his presence and the anticipated entrance with him to the marriage.

"AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT"

To our understanding the wise virgins have been entering into the marriage since the autumn of 1878, A.D., and are still entering in – passing beyond the veil, changed in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15:52.) Soon the entire First Resurrection **[R3869 : page 314]** will be complete, the last member being changed. Then and there the door will be shut and no more will be permitted to enter. Thank God that this does not signify so dreadful a condition as some of the Lord's dear people think. It does not mean the close of the door of hope, and that all outside, the foolish virgins as well as the world, will go down to hopeless despair in the Second Death. It does mean, however, the close of the great and grand opportunity which will never open again – it signifies the completion of the Kingdom class, the Bride class, the close of the narrow way to glory, honor, immortality and joint-heirship with Christ.

The foolish virgins go and buy the precious oil and get their lamps trimmed and burning, but too late for the marriage, too late to be of those who will be the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And thus in the parable it is represented that when they knock the Bridegroom will say, "I do not recognize you as being members of the Bride class; you must not come in." Instead **[R3869 : page**

315] of entering into the joys of the Lord with the others they will be permitted for a time at least to have their portion in the great time of trouble which will then prevail throughout the world; weeping and gnashing of teeth, sorrow, disappointment, chagrin, will be the portion not only of the foolish virgins but of all the families of the earth in that time. We are glad to know that that great day of trouble will prepare the world of mankind for the glorious conditions of the Millennial Kingdom, which will then shortly be ushered in. The Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in its beams, and many people shall go and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord's house; he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths. For the law shall go forth from Mount Zion [the glorified Kingdom, the heavenly Kingdom], and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem [from the earthly representatives of the heavenly Kingdom]." – Mal. 4:2; Isa. 2:3.

How inconsistent the thought that the folly of these virgins should not only exclude them from the Kingdom blessings, but that even after they get the oil of the holy Spirit later on they should be consigned to an eternity of torture or loss! How unreasonable! how inconsistent! On the contrary, how much in harmony with the general divine character and program is this parable as we have here pictured its fulfilment. We can sympathize with the foolish virgins while we cannot commend them, but must reprove them. We can look forward to the time when they, as the great company of Revelation 7, shall wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and be ushered into the presence of the Lord and the Bride and become, as represented in Psalms 45, the virgins, the Bride's companions and co-laborers in the Kingdom work – servants before the throne, where they might have been, by proper love and zeal and knowledge in the present time, members of the Bride class, in the throne.

"NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR"

Our Lord concludes the parable with the words, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour." The revised version omits from verse 13 the words, "wherein the Son of man cometh," because these are not found in any of the old Greek MSS. The thought, however, is practically the same – Watch, because ye know neither the day nor the hour in which this parable will be fulfilled. The watching, no doubt, has been beneficial to the Lord's people all through the Gospel age, and is still more profitable to the wise virgin class of the present day, because it explains to these their circumstances, conditions, etc. All of the wise virgin class should be in the attitude commanded in this parable; they should have a knowledge of the fact that the Bridegroom is coming; they should have lamps and a full supply of oil. Those living in this ready condition will be neither alarmed nor surprised at the message when they hear it as it is now going forth, "Behold the Bridegroom is present." We are living in the *parousia* (presence) of the Son of Man – the wise virgins are already falling into line in the procession and entering in to the marriage; the full number will soon be found and the door will be shut. All in this watching attitude of heart, with the full measure of the Spirit of the Lord in their hearts will be very quickly attracted by the first intimation that the Bridegroom is present. These, trimming their lamps, examining the Scriptures, will quickly discern the truthfulness of the announcement, and speedily prepare and take their places with the wise virgins. The announcement, the truth upon this subject, is indeed a testing, proving which of the professed virgins of the Lord have the oil in their vessels, the right spirit of humility, patience, love, devotion, interest in the things of the Bridegroom. Such and such only are desired by the Bridegroom or will be permitted to enter.

In view of this it is evident that our work in the present time is not only to proclaim the Bridegroom's presence but to assist

those who have the oil in their vessels to trim their lamps. If it is not already too late to go to buy the oil it soon will be, and hence our special care should be in respect to those who have the oil of the Lord's Spirit but who are still asleep or drowsy and need to have an announcement of his presence brought kindly, patiently, perseveringly to their attention.

It is not the supposition of the parable that when the time comes that the Bridegroom's presence is announced the virgins will not know of it. How could they trim their lamps and go out to meet him and go in with him without assurance of his presence? The watching suggested therefore by our Lord refers to the time *prior* to the presence. Those virgins who realize that the Bridegroom has come, those who have trimmed their lamps, those who have joined his procession, are not watching for his *coming*, but know of his *presence*, because that day and hour has come and has not found them unprepared, without sufficient oil.

Let us praise God for the blessings and mercies already ours, and go on faithfully rejoicing in the light of our lamps and in the anticipation of the glorious nuptial feast and the later glorious work, with the Bridegroom, of blessing all the families of the earth. He that hath this knowledge will by it be separated more and more from the world and its spirit, and be gradually more and more transformed from glory to glory in the likeness of the Bridegroom.
