

THE TEN VIRGINS

– *SEPTEMBER 13.* – *MATTHEW 25:1-13.* –

**"Watch, therefore; for ye know not the day nor the hour."
– Verse 13.**

THE PARABLE of today's Study is supposed to have been uttered by our Lord about three days before His crucifixion, as part of His response to the question, "What shall be the sign of Thy Coming and of the end of the Age?" In the preceding chapter the Master traces various experiences of His people down to the time of His Second Coming – the time of the consummation of this Gospel Age and of the inauguration of the Messianic Age, the Age immediately ahead of us.

In considering this parable, it is proper to notice, first of all, that it has not been applicable at all times and under all conditions. This is shown by the first word, "Then" – at that time – "the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins." Furthermore, it should be noted that the parable does not describe the world in general, but merely the "virgin" class – the Church class – the pure ones who have left the world, who have come to God through Christ, who have been justified by faith in His blood, and who have thus been made prospective members of the Kingdom class, the Bride class. This parable shows, then, that in the end of this Age a separation, or division, will take place in the true Church of Christ, regardless of [R5522 : page 252] what may be the attitude of the world or of the nominal Church.

With the Jews, betrothal took place between the bride and the bridegroom usually a year before they came together at the marriage feast. During that year the obligations of marriage applied, and any unfaithfulness to the bridegroom vitiated or annulled the contract, which was usually made, not by the

bridegroom himself with the bride, but through others, intermediaries. So, during this Gospel Age, a Church is being betrothed to Christ, and covenant obligations are being entered into in behalf of the Bridegroom, Christ, who is "afar off" and who is now entering into a covenant with those who would be members of His Bride class. These covenants and agreements are made through brethren, ministers, servants, of the Lord and of the Church.

The Scriptures represent that during the long period between the time when our Lord went away and the time of His return there has been a serious unfaithfulness on the part of many professing to be of the Church of Christ. In the Revelation these are charged with harlotry. We are assured that they will not be recognized, but will be fully repudiated, rejected, at His Second Coming. But although the mass of those professing to have entered into a covenant with the Lord were foreseen to be unfaithful, nevertheless the Lord just as distinctly declares that at His Coming there will be a faithful "virgin" class – pure ones, separate from the world, uncontaminated. It is this class which the parable describes. It shows incidentally that not even all of the virgins will be accepted as members of the Bride; but that, in addition to purity, a certain watchfulness and zeal will be considered essential.

PAROUSIA AND EPIPHANIA

Many Bible students hold that this parable began to have its fulfilment in the Millerite Movement, which in 1844 culminated in a disappointment. For some fourteen years prior to that time a cry had gone forth throughout the Church that the time of the Second Coming of Christ was at hand. History tells us that many noble characters of all denominations believed the Message and, in the strength of their faith, went forth to meet the Bridegroom. But they were disappointed, in that the Bridegroom tarried.

Then all of the "virgins," both wise and foolish, slumbered and slept. A general stupor, uncertainty and drowsiness came over all. Some of them dreamed of strange knockings during that time, too. Later, at midnight, the Bridegroom came apparently, and announcements were made to that effect – "Behold the Bridegroom! Go ye forth to meet Him!"

An increasing number of Bible students believe that this latter cry sounded forth just thirty years after the disappointment of the followers of William Miller; namely, in 1874. They do not claim that Jesus came in the flesh then; but, on the contrary, they hold that He is never to come in the flesh – that He is flesh no longer, that He has "ascended up where He was before" – to the spirit plane – far above angels.

These Bible students call our attention to the fact that the Bible distinctly differentiates between the Parousia of Christ and His Epiphania, at His Second Coming. The word Parousia signifies presence, without in any sense of [R5523 : page 252] the word indicating that the presence is visible. The word Epiphania signifies the revealing of one who is already present. These Bible students claim that in the end of this Gospel Age Christ will be present, invisible to men, during a period of forty years, doing a work especially in His Church – rewarding the faithful, as shown in the parables of the Pounds and the Talents, and receiving the "wise virgins," as in the parable of our lesson.

With the conclusion of this work of separating the wise virgins, and after they shall have entered into the joys of their Lord by the glorious change of the First Resurrection, then will come Immanuel's Epiphania, revealing, showing forth. "When He shall appear, ye also shall appear with Him in glory." "He shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance." In other words, the revelation of Christ to the world will be subsequent to His revealment of Himself to the "wise virgin" class. The world will

know that He has taken His great power and begun His Reign of Righteousness, not by seeing Jesus in the flesh, but by seeing the great Time of Trouble which then will break upon the world – "a Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation." – Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21.

THE LAMPS AND THE OIL

The views of these Bible students are interesting to us. Whether all of their conclusions may be accepted or not, they are at least worthy of consideration, inasmuch as they furnish a new interpretation of some Scriptures not previously understood. Whether they have the times and seasons properly divided is another matter, upon which each individual Christian should use his own judgment. Let us follow the parable from this standpoint; for we know of no other to which the terms and conditions of the parable could be applied.

Let us note that all the "virgins" are to hear this Message, "Behold the Bridegroom!" – the expected One has come. It does not follow that they will all hear at once – rather the contrary. During the period of the "cry," whether it be forty years or more or less, as long as the cry goes forth there will be opportunity to hear it. And all of the virgin class must hear it.

The "oil" of the parable evidently represents the Holy Spirit, while the "lamps" represent the Bible. All of these virgins had the Bible and some light therefrom; but only those possessing the Spirit of the Truth in their hearts in good supply would be able to hold out. To the others the Lamp would cease to burn. They would cease to be able to appreciate and apply the Scriptural prophecies relative to Christ's Second Coming.

ONLY ONE WAY TO GET THE HOLY SPIRIT

The "wise virgins" trimmed their lamps in response to the Message – they examined the Scriptures. Like the Bereans of old, they "searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things be so." Thus they had light in their lamps, as well as "oil," the Holy Spirit, in their hearts. Then it was that the "foolish virgins" said, "Give us of your oil." We wish that we could be as earnest at Bible study as you are, but these things are no longer interesting to us. Do give us some of your oil (spirit)!

However, there is but the one way to get the Holy Spirit, and that is from the Lord Himself and upon His own terms. In order to receive a fresh supply of Oil we need to look well to our covenant with the Lord and to our zeal for Him and the Truth, to our loyalty to the principles of righteousness. This costs something of time and study. It costs something, perhaps, of neglect of the things of this life. It means to forego strife for wealth and fame. It means to live close to God.

This is the cost of the precious Oil which is to give Light to those who will have it. Hence the wise virgins declared, in no ungenerous spirit, that they had none too much of the oil of the Holy Spirit for themselves. Then they advised their brethren who were deficient to go to God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and to seek the Oil by obedience to His Word, by the searching of the Scriptures and by close following of the Master's leading in the Narrow Way. **[R5523 : page 253]**

THE SHUTTING OF THE DOOR

Meantime, the "wise virgins" were going in, one after another – passing beyond the veil – until finally the last of the foreordained number had gone in and no more could enter. "Then the door was shut."

Once in our misunderstanding we thought that this shutting of the "door" after the wise virgin class had gone in represented that all the foolish virgins and all the remainder of mankind were shut out of God's favor – banished to eternal torment. Now, however, we notice that the "door" merely shuts in the Kingdom class, the Little Flock, to whom it is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom. While others will never be able to enter into that Kingdom, God has other blessings for them, all of which will come through the Kingdom class – Christ and His Bride.

The parable shows that later on the foolish virgin class get the Oil, the Holy Spirit, in proper measure and are able to get light from their lamps; that they recognize that the end of the Age has come, and earnestly desire, and in prayer "knock," that the door of the Kingdom may be opened to them. But the Lord's answer to them is, "I cannot recognize you. There is only one Bride class, and they have already come in to Me."

In view of this, all of the Lord's consecrated people should be earnestly on the watch, filled with the Spirit and having their Lamps "trimmed and burning." None might know the day and the hour when the Bridegroom would come, in the sense of His Parousia; nevertheless, all of the virgins were to be aware of His presence after He had come. Any one who did not know of it would, to that extent, lack the evidence that he belonged to the Bride class; even the foolish virgins knew of the Bridegroom's presence.

In the parable the Lord does not tell what may happen to the foolish virgins; but other Scriptures show that they pass through a portion, at least, of the great Time of Trouble coming upon the world; and that when finally they are received of the Lord, it will not be as His joint-heirs in the Throne, but as honored servants of the Bride. They are elsewhere spoken of as "the virgins, the Bride's companions, who follow her" and who will ultimately be brought

into the presence of the King and have an inferior share in the work of the Kingdom. (Psalm 45:15,16.) Next in order will come the blessing of Natural Israel and of all the families of the earth for a thousand years, for their uplifting from sin and death to righteousness and life eternal – or failing in this, the destruction of the incorrigible in the Second Death, from which there will be no recovery.

