

# The Mind of Christ

## The Parable of the Ten Virgins

### INTRODUCTION:

- I. For some time now, we have been looking at the events during the FINAL WEEK leading up our Lord's crucifixion.
  - A. More specifically, we've been focusing our attention on Tuesday of that week – one of the most EVENT FILLED days in the life of the Savior.
    1. First, Jesus was challenged by the CHIEF PRIESTS and the ELDERS of the people over His authority to drive out the money changers from the Temple and to teach His disciples there.
      - a. To answer those corrupt religious leaders, Jesus taught three parables – The Parable of the Two Sons, The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, and The Parable of the Wedding Feast.
      - b. Those three parables were specifically directed at these wicked men, exposing their UNFAITHFULNESS to the Law, their HYPOCRISY and their BITTER HATRED toward Jesus, the Son of God.

2. Immediately after THAT confrontation, Jesus was challenged by OTHER religious and political groups in Jerusalem – the Sadducees, the Herodians and the Pharisees.
  - a. They tried to entrap Jesus with His own teaching.
  - b. But one by one, the Lord answered and silenced every one of His challengers.
3. As Jesus and His disciples left the Temple late that afternoon, He told His disciples that the time is coming when the great Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed – when not one stone would be left standing upon another.
4. After Jesus and His disciples walked the short distance from the Temple to the nearby Mount of Olives, the disciples asked Jesus WHEN all these things would happen, and what would be the SIGN of His COMING and the END OF THE WORLD (end of the age).
5. In Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21, Jesus answered their questions regarding the impending destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.
6. But after the Lord's discourse about the destruction of Jerusalem, Matthew's account of the gospel records three more parables of Jesus that were specifically directed to His DISCIPLES.

- a. The three parables are recorded in Matthew chapter 25 are more commonly known as “The Parable of the Ten Virgins,” “The Parable of the Talents,” and “The Parable of the Sheep and Goats.”
  - b. This time, Jesus began answering His disciples’ question about the end of the world, or the end of the age.
- B. To help us understand the meaning of The Parable of the Ten Virgins, we need to go back in time and look at this parable from the viewpoint of Jewish culture in the days of Jesus – specifically looking at Jewish traditions regarding marriage ceremonies.
1. To do this, we first need to understand something about the various people we would find at a wedding in those days, and then learn something about the role each of those persons played.
  2. Once we understand the background of this parable, we then want to make application to us.

**BODY:**

- I. In “The Parable of the Ten Virgins” there are FOUR PERSONS that are either SPECIFICALLY mentioned or that are IMPLIED – the BRIDEGROOM, the BRIDE (who is implied), the FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM (or the HEARLD) who announced the coming of the bridegroom (who is also implied), and the TEN VIRGINS.

- A. Let's begin by looking at the "BRIDEGROOM."
1. One of the first things we learn about this term is that Jesus used it on one occasion to describe Himself and His relationship with the CHURCH – the bride of Christ.
  2. Back in **Matthew chapter 9**, early in the ministry of Jesus, the disciples of John the Baptist noticed that the disciples of the Lord weren't fasting, and so they asked Jesus why.
    - a. **Matthew 9:15** – *And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."*
  3. What did Jesus mean by this statement?
    - a. Jesus was alluding to the fact that as long as He (the bridegroom) is present, it's a time of great joy and celebration.
    - b. But the day will come when He will be taken away – which is a reference to His crucifixion – and when that happens, His disciples WILL fast out of deep sorrow.
  4. In Biblical times, the term "BRIDEGROOM" was used differently that we use it today. In those days the term BRIDEGROOM could refer to a man who had JUST GOTTEN MARRIED, or who was ABOUT to get married.

- a. The way JESUS used the term was in referring to a man who was ABOUT to get married.
5. In those days, there were some very strict customs regarding the duties of a BRIDEGROOM.
    - a. For example, it was customary for a young man who wanted to marry a young woman to FIRST go to the young woman's FATHER and ask for permission to marry his daughter.
    - b. The father would almost always require the young man to pay a DOWRY for the privilege of marrying his daughter.
      - (1). A dowry could be a certain sum of money, property (such as a parcel of land), or even livestock – but it had to be something of commercial value.
      - (2). The reason for the payment of a dowry was simple. A man who had SONS could rely on THEM to take care of him when he got too old to care for himself.
      - (3). But a man with DAUGHTERS didn't have that privilege. When DAUGHTERS married they came under the legal authority of their husbands, and generally had few legal rights – and certainly couldn't decide ON THEIR OWN to commit financial resources to care for aging parents.

- (4). Therefore, a man with daughters would require a dowry in exchange for his daughter so he would have a kind of “retirement fund” for his old age.
6. After the young man got permission to marry his future bride, the couple would then become “BETROTHED.”
- a. Being “BETROTHED” in Biblical times is vaguely similar to a couple being “engaged” today, but a “betrothal” was far more serious in nature.
  - b. Today, if a couple wants to get engaged he gives her a ring, and they announce their intentions to eventually marry.
  - c. But in BIBLICAL times a man and woman who were BETROTHED were required to go through a FORMAL ceremony in which they would be OFFICIALLY engaged – but NOT officially married.
  - d. During the time of the betrothal, it was common for the young woman to be called the “WIFE” of the young man and for him to be called her “HUSBAND” – even though the marriage ceremony had not yet taken place.
- (1). An example of this is seen in the betrothal of Mary and Joseph – even though they had not yet married, the Scriptures call them a betrothed husband and wife.

**(Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:4-5)**

- e. Today, an engaged couple can ALSO simply decide to BREAK their engagement and go their separate ways – she may or may not give back the ring.
  - f. But in BIBLICAL TIMES, the only thing that could BREAK this betrothal was the infidelity (sexual immorality) of one of the parties.
  - g. The innocent party would be required to “put away” their betrothed by giving them an official writing or divorcement.
7. After being betrothed to his wife, the young man would begin preparing a home for his bride-to-be.
- a. This process could take anywhere from a few days to several months.
  - b. In fact, lengthy betrothals were common.
8. The father of the young man was the ONLY ONE who could say when his son could go for his bride.
- a. Only after the father was satisfied that everything had been properly prepared for the bride, could the bridegroom leave home to marry his bride.
  - b. Jesus alluded to this practice when He was speaking to His disciples about leaving to prepare a place for us in heaven.
- (1). **John 14:1-4** – *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's*

*house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

9. As the time for the wedding grew near, it was customary for the bridegroom to send a FRIEND – a HERALD – who would go throughout the village of the BRIDE and announce the coming of the bridegroom.
10. However, even though the BRIDE was warned that the bridegroom was coming, no one knew the EXACT hour when the bridegroom would come for his bride.
  - a. It was a common practice for the bridegroom to intentionally DELAY his coming to test the readiness of the bride.
  - b. If she was PREPARED at all times, she would be showing respect for the bridegroom and reverence for the marriage.
  - c. However, if she was UNPREPARED, she would be seen as showing little concern for the bridegroom or the marriage. It was a serious breach of etiquette for a bride to be unprepared for the coming of the bridegroom – it was seen as a sign of great disrespect.

11. Not only was the BRIDE required to be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom, so were her ATTENDANTS (young virgin women).
  - a. And this brings us to the TEN VIRGINS in the parable of Jesus.
  
- II. The ten virgins in this parable were much like BRIDESMAIDS in our own culture – but the role they played in the marriage ceremony and the wedding feast was FAR MORE important than merely standing up with the bride during the wedding ceremony.
  - A. The ten virgins in this parable had the responsibility of officially ESCORTING the bridegroom and the bride to the wedding ceremony and wedding feast.
    1. It was a GREAT privilege to be selected as an escort for a bride and bridegroom.
      - a. These young women were chosen for their moral purity and for their devoted respect to the bride and her husband-to-be.
    2. As we mentioned earlier, it was customary for the bridegroom to intentionally delay his coming to see if his bride was prepared for his coming at any time.

- a. The young virgin women who would escort for the wedding party ALSO had to be ready at all times for the coming of the bridegroom.
3. Since Jewish weddings in Biblical times took place at night – which was a long-held tradition to be married under the “canopy of heaven” – the young virgins needed lamps to light the way for the wedding party.
    - a. Therefore, when they heard the bridegroom would be coming soon, they would prepare their lamps by filling them with oil so they could keep them burning at all times.
    - b. Young virgin women who took their responsibilities seriously would have made adequate preparation and would have extra containers of oil to keep their lamps lit in case the bridegroom delayed his coming longer than expected.
    - c. If one of these young women allowed her lamp to go out, it would be seen as a LACK of trustworthiness, dependability, loyalty and respect for the bride and the bridegroom.
    - d. Being so careless as to allow their lamps to go out was such a serious breach of etiquette, these young women would actually be FORBIDDEN to enter the wedding and the wedding feast.
    - e. They would be left out in the darkness of the night.

III. With all this background, let's read this parable and see how Jesus applied it to His second coming, and also see how it applies to us today.

A. **Matthew 25:1-13** – *"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."*

1. As we've learned from our study of Matthew chapter 24 and the related passages in Mark and Luke, Jesus had been discussing the impending destruction of Jerusalem.
  2. Now He moves to a NEW subject in His discourse – He begins with verse 1 of Matthew 25 speaking of the “kingdom of heaven.”
    - a. While the term “kingdom of heaven” can refer heaven itself, it is ALSO used to speak of the Lord's church – the spiritual kingdom Jesus came to establish following His death, burial and resurrection from the dead.
- B. As we take a closer look at this parable, we can certainly see a number of parallels between this parable and the relationship of the Lord to His church.
1. First, we've already seen that Jesus used the term “bridegroom” to apply to Himself.
  2. Second, there are several passages in the New Testament that allude to the fact that the Lord's church is the “bride of Christ.”
    - a. But remember, the bridegroom and the bride are only **BETROTHED** or **ENGAGED** to one another – the **WEDDING** ceremony will occur when the bridegroom comes for the bride and they enter the wedding and its feast.

- b. In the same manner, the Lord's church is BETROTHED to Christ NOW – that's because the WEDDING will actually take place when the Lord comes for His bride at the end of time.
- (1). This is why Paul told the saints in Rome in **Romans 7:4**:  
*Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another — to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.*
- (2). This is why Paul ALSO told the saints in Corinth in **2 Corinthians 11:2**: *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have BETHROTHED you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste VIRGIN to Christ.*
- c. But after the Lord's return – at the end of time when He come FOR His bride – the WEDDING ceremony will finally take place.
- (1). This is why John says in **Revelation 21:2** – AFTER the great judgment scene of Revelation chapter 20 – that he saw heaven and all the redeemed as: *the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a BRIDE adorned for her husband.*

- (2). This is also why John wrote in **verse 9 of Revelation 21**: *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the BRIDE, the Lamb's WIFE."*
  - (3). And finally, in **Revelation 22:17**, John wrote, *And the Spirit and the BRIDE say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*
3. But remember, in this parable Jesus ALSO made mention of the WEDDING FEAST – a feast characterized by great joy and celebration. This obviously represents heaven itself; a place of great joy and rejoicing.

IV. So NOW, let's make some application of this parable to ourselves.

- A. In the parable, FIVE of the virgins had made adequate preparation for the coming of the bridegroom – but the remaining five had not.
  1. The five virgins who had made ADEQUATE PREPARATION were demonstrating trustworthiness, respect, sincerity and loyalty.
    - a. They wanted to make ABSOLUTELY SURE they would be able to fulfill their duty as escorts for the bridegroom and

bride, and would therefore be allowed into the wedding and its great feast.

b. And so, when the bridegroom came, their lamps were still burning bright.

2. Those who were UNPREPARED were showing that they were NOT trustworthy or respectful, and were NOT demonstrating sincerity or loyalty to the bridegroom and his bride.

a. THESE virgins took a CASUAL approach to this great occasion – being part of the wedding ceremony didn't occupy the most important place in their hearts.

b. If it HAD, they would have been prepared like the other five virgins.

c. Instead, their lamps were about to run out of oil due to their own CARELESS INDIFFERENCE toward the bride and her bridegroom.

d. And because of this careless indifference, their lamps would eventually be extinguished.

B. Brethren, I think it's safe to say there are those among us this morning who are prepared for the Lord's return. But SADLY, I think it's ALSO safe to say there are some here this morning who are NOT prepared for the Lord's return.

1. Some among us this morning are faithfully doing everything we can to assure we will be able to enter the wedding feast when the Lord returns for His bride.
  2. But, there may be others among us this morning who have grown indifferent, and who have taken a casual attitude toward the Lord and His church, and are clearly NOT prepared for the Lord's return.
- C. In the parable, those wise virgins who had prepared were allowed to enter the wedding feast, but the door was shut to those who were not prepared.
1. Brethren, there are those among us today who will be welcomed into the great wedding feast when the Lord comes for His bride.
    - a. What awaits us is joy beyond description – an ETERNAL celebration of joy for the Bridegroom and His Bride in heaven.
  2. But sadly, there may be those among us this morning who will be eternally SHUT OUT of the great wedding feast in heaven.
    - a. For those of you who WILL BE shut out on that day – you need to remember that it was YOUR CHOICE ALL ALONG to either be prepared or not.
    - b. No matter how much you will want to convince the Lord on that day that you truly love Him and care about the great

sacrifice He gave when He shed His OWN BLOOD for YOUR sins – No matter how much you will want to convince the Lord of all these things, your ACTIONS will speak LOUDER than your words.

- c. You will be left standing in front of a door that will be closed to you for all eternity.

D. The message of The Parable of the Ten Virgins is simple – the need to be prepared AT ALL TIMES for the coming of the bridegroom.

1. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament have clearly announced that the bridegroom is coming someday.
2. Therefore, our lamps need to be CONSTANTLY trimmed and burning bright in anticipation of the Lord's return.

## **CONCLUSION:**

I. I want you to turn with me to the last book in the New Testament – we read from it just a moment ago – the book of Revelation. Let's begin our reading in the latter part of chapter 20.

- A. **Revelation 20:11-15** – *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were*

*judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

- B. This is the terrible fate waiting for those of you who have NOT prepared yourselves for the coming of the Lord.
1. I want you to take special notice of a few things in this passage:
    - a. First, notice both the small and great will be there. It won't matter on that day whether you were the most INFLUENTIAL and most WEALTHY person to have ever walked the face of the earth, or whether you were the most INSIGNIFICANT – the **small** AND the **great** will stand before God in judgment.
    - b. Second, notice that everyone was judged ACCORDING TO HIS WORKS. The Lord won't be listening to you plead your case before His throne of judgment as a condemned man might plead his case before a judge. The Lord will simply examine the RECORD, and will judge you on the basis of your WORKS.
    - c. And finally, notice that those who were NOT found written in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire.

- (1). I truly wish it were possible to soften the harsh reality of those words. But I can't.
- (2). The Lord ALWAYS speaks the truth – no matter HOW unpleasant and harsh it may be. (Remember the harsh truth the Lord spoke about the destruction of Jerusalem and its glorious temple?)
- (3). The Lord wanted the apostle John to see in THIS great vision that, *“ANYONE not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (**Revelation 20:15**)
- (4). I wish I could say this another way, but with all the love and compassion I can muster, I must say to those of you here this morning who are NOT prepared for the coming of the Lord, THIS is the fate waiting for YOU.

II. Now I want you to read with me the words found at the beginning of Revelation chapter 21.

A. **Revelation 21:1-8** – *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they*

*shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

1. There are some very beautiful things the LORD HIMSELF says in these verses about those whose names are written in the Lambs Book of Life.
  - a. First, God Himself will be with them. Can you imagine how glorious it will be to spend an eternity in the very presence of the God of heaven and His Son Jesus Christ?
  - b. Second, *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

- (1). Just imagine what it will be like spending an eternity  
FREE from death, sorrow, crying and pain.
  2. But, once again, even in THESE verses, the Lord speaks to those who will NOT inherit eternal life in heaven.
    - a. The Lord characterizes these people as cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars.
    - b. THIS time, the Lord HIMSELF says these, "*shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*" (**Revelation 21:8**)
    - c. These are the LORD'S words – not mine.
- III. Which group do YOU want to be in on that day? ONE things is CERTAIN. You WILL BE in one or the other.
- A. If you're NOT prepared to stand before the Lord in judgment, then there is one of two things you need to do.
    1. If you're a child of God who has lost your desire to faithfully serve the Lord, and have turned away from the Lord, you can come back TODAY.
      - a. The same apostle John who wrote those fearful words in the book of Revelation, also wrote these words in **1 John 1:8-9**:  
*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the*

*truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

- b. It's as simple as that.
2. If you've NEVER obeyed the gospel of Christ you need to do that while you still have time.
- a. You need to do the same things people in New Testament times did to become a follower of Jesus Christ.
  - b. Believe that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, repent of your past sins, confess your faith in Him, and be buried with Christ in baptism for the remission of your sins.
- B. There is no need for anyone to leave this auditorium this morning UNPREPARED to face the Lord in judgment. But some of you will.
1. So, as we sing the invitation song, I want you to think about this:
- a. RIGHT NOW, your eternal destiny is in your OWN hands. YOU can decide RIGHT NOW where you want to spend eternity.
  - b. But if you leave the building this morning, having rejected the Lord one more time, your destiny will THEN be in the LORD'S hands. And there's only ONE eternal destiny that awaits you.