

Matthew 25:1-13 (NKJV)

- ¹ Then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
- ² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.
- ³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,
- ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
- ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.
- ⁶ And at midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"
- ⁷ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
- ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out."
- ⁹ 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."
- ¹⁰ 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.
- ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!"
- ¹² But he answered and said, "*Assuredly, I say to you, I don't know you.*"
- ¹³ *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.*



The most common interpretation of this parable is that those ten virgins represent born-again believers belonging to the Kingdom of God who were all saved at one time. Then some of them lost their salvation due to their lack of watchfulness in morality and good works.

Let's analyze first what we know for sure about this parable. First, the parable is about the Kingdom of Heaven, about a bridegroom who is king Jesus, and about ten virgins who represent the visible church of Christ. Second, the action in this parable occurs between the first and second coming of Jesus. Third, the harshness of the bridegroom's answer in Verse 12—"I don't know you" or "I never knew you"—makes very clear this parable is about an eternal matter of life and death, respectively the matter of eternal salvation into the Kingdom of God or of eternal damnation. Fourth, it's also obvious that when the bridegroom came, alluding to the second coming of Jesus, some of those virgins, representing some Christians, participated in the wedding of the Lamb. That means they entered heaven while the rest were rejected and went to hell. Only three things are left to elucidate: (1) First, what do the oil in the lamps and the extra oil in the jars represent? (2) Second, were the people rejected genuinely born again in the first place or not? (3) Third, what does watchfulness mean?

The oil in the Old Testament was used to anoint kings and priests. It was a picture of anointing to work for God:

1 Samuel 16:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Then Samuel took *the horn of oil and anointed him* (David) in the midst of his brothers; and *the Spirit of the Lord* came upon David from that day forward. So, Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

In the New Testament, believers are anointed with the Holy Spirit, as we see in these passages:

Acts 10:38 (NKJV)

³⁸ how *God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit* and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, for God was with Him.

2 Corinthians 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and *has anointed us* is God.

1 John 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ But *you have an anointing from the Holy One*, and you know all things.

1 John 2:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ But *the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you*, and you don't need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing *teaches you* concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and believers are also anointed with the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation. 1 John 2:27 says the anointing the believers received from Him abides in them and teaches them all things. According to John 14:16, 14:26, and 16:13, the Holy Spirit is the Helper given to believers to be with them forever, teach them all things, and lead them into all truth. So, the oil in the parable of the virgins is a picture of the Holy Spirit. The light of the lamps represents good works, morality, fruits of the Spirit, or different divine acts of the Spirit like healing the sick, casting out demons and raising the dead.

Now, what is the difference between the oil already in the lamps and the oil in the extra jars? On one hand, based on John 14:16 and 1 John 2:27, we know once the Holy Spirit comes into believers, He abides in them forever. He no longer comes and leaves like He used to do in the Old Testament with the people of God. Moreover, Ephesians 1:13-14 strengthens this eternal

presence of the Holy Spirit in believers by asserting that He is a seal of salvation, a guarantee of believers' inheritance until they acquire full possession of it:

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also having believed, *you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

¹⁴ *who is the guarantee of our inheritance* until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

The Greek word translated as “guarantee” in this passage (gr. *arrabon*) is a legal and commercial term that means first installment, deposit, down payment, or pledge. It represents a payment that obligates the contracting party to make further payments. When God gave believers the Holy Spirit, He committed Himself to give them all the consequent blessings of eternal life, as well as a great reward in heaven with Him. So, the five virgins for whom lamps ceased to burn cannot represent genuinely born-again believers who once had the Holy Spirit in them as a seal and then lost Him.

On the other hand, a closer look into Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments, will reveal that the Holy Spirit can come over people just for a while, for them to fulfill some divine tasks or even to do good works. However, it is not necessary for the Holy Spirit to remain inside them in a saving way. In other words, the Holy Spirit comes upon them, but not in them. A few examples from the Old Testament include Samson, who received the spirit and anointing of might, King Saul, who received the spirit of prophecy, Joshua, and King Solomon, who both received the spirit of wisdom in different measures. All those people “burned” for a while by the anointing of the Holy Spirit without being saved during their lifetime because Jesus had not come yet. At that moment in history, they belonged to the kingdom of darkness.

Coming into the New Testament, in the age before the death of Jesus, Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus, healed people, and cast out demons through the Holy Spirit, together with the other disciples, but he was called the son of perdition in John 17:12, and

ended his life without being saved. Furthermore, as we have seen earlier in Hebrews 6:4-6, there can be people represented by the rocky ground from the parable of the Sower who are enlightened with the Gospel, who taste the heavenly gift, who become partakers of the work of the Holy Spirit, and who taste the good Word of God, but have no root in themselves. These people continue to rely on their good works, morality, and self-righteousness for acceptance before God. Moreover, Matthew 7:21-23 seems to imply somehow that there can be people who prophesy, who cast out demons, and who do mighty works in Jesus's name, but still are not recognized by Jesus in the end. The way Jesus didn't recognize the foolish virgins is not different:

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

²² Many will say to Me in that day, "*Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?*"

²³ And then I will declare to them, "*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!*"

1 John 2:19 advocates as well that those who apparently departed from faith were not really in it, for if they had been, they would have continued until the end. But they "went out," and so it became clear they had not been in faith:

1 John 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ They went out from us, *but they were not of us*; for if they had been of us, *they would have continued with us*; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

Now putting all these facts together, who are these people who are not genuinely born again but have a very strong appearance of being saved by their external deeds? Their works even

consist of miracles of healing and acts of deliverance. They can be included in three categories. The first one is people who are sincerely excited about Christ, who stay for a while in the church and try to model their lives after biblical principles, but never take a decision for Jesus. We already know the gifts of God are irrevocable (Romans 11:29). We know He can use even a donkey for His purposes like He did with Balaam's donkey. Since God loves people so much, we can conclude that He can use even these unsaved people to touch other people's lives through miracles, for the sake of them who are being ministered to. However, that is not necessarily a guarantee of salvation for the people doing the ministry.

The use of supernatural powers is not equal to being born again.

Outwardly, like the virgins' lamps, these professing believers can seem to burn and shine for a while externally, without that light having any saving effect on them. Salvation is a love relationship with Christ based on faith. It's beyond gifts and miracles.

The second category of this type of people can be the nominal Christians, good, moral people who have an appreciation for Christian principles and values and call themselves Christians. These people go to church from time to time but have no saving relationship with Christ. They are usually Greek Orthodox Christians, many Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and even some Protestants, especially in the United States of America.

The third category of this type of people can be people who belong to Satan, who deliberately portray themselves as Christians and even perform miracles using the power of Satan, with the sole purpose of deceiving people, even the elect. These people can seem to preach the truth of the Bible, but secretly twist some parts of it in a subtle way so the differences would not be easily recognized and be able to deceive others. In Matthew 24:24, Jesus warns His disciples that, in the end times, false christs and prophets will rise and intentionally perform great signs and wonders to deceive people.

Matthew 24:24 (NKJV)

²⁴ For false christs and false prophets will rise and *show great signs and wonders* to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

Moreover, in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, the apostle Paul says Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light and has ministers who also transform themselves into apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness:

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, *transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.*

¹⁴ And no wonder! For *Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

¹⁵ Therefore it's no great thing if *his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

If you are like me, you are probably wondering: "Are there such people? What do they look like?" I had the same doubt until one day, I met a young man, just in the same period when I asked the Holy Spirit about these challenging verses. This young man was a hard-rock musician and songwriter, and he had been involved in the occult, even when he wrote his songs. He told me his bandmates worshiped Lucifer regularly for worldly benefits like fame, money, and pleasures. He also told me he knew people who worshiped Satan and performed miracles using his power, but they deliberately portrayed themselves as Christians to deceive people. They preached 80% of the truth with 20% very subtle twists to the core truth. I was shocked to hear that, but it brought more light to me regarding these verses, that such people exist: ministers of Satan disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.

By now, it has probably become clear that the extra jar of oil represents the invisible part only authentic believers have. That invisible part is the Holy Spirit present as a seal of salvation within believers, consequent to their faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came to stay in them for eternity. Those without the extra jar of oil may generate a similar light as those having it, they may "burn" for a while, but they are not really saved. In their case, the Holy Spirit might have only come upon them and not in them. This conclusion is also supported by the strong statement Jesus made to these people in Matthew 25:12 and 7:23: "I don't know you," or "I never knew you." If these people were once saved authentically and

then lost their salvation through evil deeds, Jesus could not have told them He never knew them. He could have told them something like: “Yes, I knew you once, but now you no longer belong to me.” That would be more appropriate if these people had ever put their faith in Jesus and made Him Lord in a saving way.

It’s imperative to remember that people who don’t want to be rejected to enter heaven, and wonder themselves, in fear, if they are in that category, they can rest assured that they are not. The simple fact that they are asking themselves that question and this issue preoccupies them proves beyond a shadow of a doubt they are not in that category.

People who have consciously put their faith in Christ and have confessed Him as Lord of their lives can never get into the lost group without their knowing.

Last, what does it mean to watch? As I mentioned before, preparedness or watchfulness is the mark of faith, which is the only prerequisite for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven and participating in the celebration of the wedding feast of the bridegroom. Some people stress alertness, but forget that, in the parable of the virgins, they were all asleep.

Preparedness is the response of faith to the message of the Gospel, which enables one to be received in the Kingdom at the time of the bridegroom’s unexpected arrival.

The lack of proper preparation is the demonstration of unbelief in Christ’s sacrifice as the only way of salvation, which will disqualify one from the entrance and enjoyment of the Kingdom.

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