

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

SESSION SEVEN: CULTIVATING THE OIL OF INTIMACY WITH JESUS (MATTHEW 25:1-13)

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I. THE CONTEXT OF THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS (MT. 25:1-13)

- A. Jesus connected preparation for the end times to intimacy with God. In Matthew 24-25, Jesus taught on the end times (Mt. 24:3-44) then applied his teaching in three parables to those He called to leadership (Mt. 24:45-25:30) before describing His final judgment (Mt. 25:31-46). These two chapters are “one teaching” that is focused on preparing leaders for the end times.
- B. The greatest revival and the greatest pressure in history will come in the generation in which Jesus returns. We are to continue in our ministry to bring in the great harvest and to impact the seven spheres of society. The light will increase at the same time that the darkness increases. The wheat and tares will mature together at the end of the age (Mt. 13:30).
- C. Jesus said that He would come quickly. We are to be faithful during the time of His delay.
1. Parable #1: ***Jesus’ delay is shorter than expected.*** The parable of the good and evil servants in Mt. 24:45-51 contrasts two types of leaders in the kingdom. The wicked leaders worked with ***wrong motives*** that abused their God-given blessing and authority. The good servants are the leaders who are ***wise*** and ***faithful*** as they feed God’s people.
 2. Parable #2: ***Jesus’ delay is longer than expected.*** The parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Mt. 25:1-13 emphasizes the need to stay connected with the Spirit to cultivate intimacy with Jesus as our Bridegroom God. Some wise leaders with good motives end up working with a ***wrong spirit*** by neglecting to maintain their intimacy with God.
 3. Parable #3: ***Jesus’ delay is harder than expected.*** The parable of the faithful steward in Mt. 25:14-30 focuses on being faithful in our ministry assignment in the times it seems small and hard (Mt. 25:21, 24). The majority have a small ministry assignment. Those responding wrongly worked with the ***wrong evaluation*** and neglected their assignment.
- D. In the end times the Spirit will emphasize three aspects of Jesus’ personality and ministry in being Bridegroom, King, and Judge (Mt. 24-25, Rev. 19; Isa. 61-63; Ps. 45). We encounter His desire for us as a Bridegroom; His power as King; and His zeal, as Judge, to remove everything that hinders love. Jesus highlights these three aspects of His ministry in Mt. 24-25.
- E. In Mt. 24-25, Jesus was preparing His people to walk in power and victory in the Tribulation. The Church is raptured at the end of the Tribulation. The Church will partner with Jesus to release judgment on the Antichrist’s kingdom through prayer in the way that Moses released the ten plagues on Pharaoh. This type of prayer will be used to liberate those being oppressed by the Antichrist’s reprobate oppressors of the nations in the final 3½ years before Jesus returns.
- ²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days...³¹ He will send His angels...they will gather together [rapture] His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven... (Mt. 24:29-31)***

- F. Jesus' main exhortation to us to be prepared for the end times is that we should **watch**, or develop a heart connection with the Spirit. (Mt. 24:36, 42-44, 50; 25:13). We are exhorted to watch and pray ten times in relation to preparing for the end times (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; 1 Thes. 5:6; Rev. 16:15).

⁴² ***Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (Mt. 24:42)***

¹³ ***Watch...for you know neither the day nor hour...the Son of Man is coming. (Mt. 25:13)***

- G. "Acquiring oil" is **actively connecting with God**, not just being in isolation to "take down-time for myself." To watch is to have an **attentive heart** to what the Spirit is speaking to **our lives** and to be "anointed observers" of what He is **doing in society** with a response of prayer. Watching involves cultivating faith that agrees with what the Word and the Spirit say about Jesus' return.
- H. We prepare by watching what the Spirit is saying in Scripture, in circumstances, and in our life. **Scripture:** watch or search out **what the Bible says** about the signs of His coming. **Circumstances:** with a heart of faith, **watch the sign events and trends** that are predicted in Scripture progressively unfold. Set your heart to be an "anointed observer" of these. **Personal life:** be alert to the Spirit's stirring and challenges in your personal life and ministry.
- I. We "watch" to position ourselves to receive strength from the Spirit to love God and people. It is the place we are empowered to obey and love. It is presumptuous to seek to do this without being connected to the Spirit. I compare it to taking time to put fuel in our car instead of pushing it.

II. KINGDOM LEADERSHIP AT THE END OF THE AGE: DEFINING WISE LEADERSHIP

¹ ***Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. (Mt. 25:1-2)***

- A. **Virgins:** All believers are as **virgins** before God because of Jesus' righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17).
² ***I betrothed you to one husband...I present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)***
- B. **Lamp:** Each of these virgins had a **lamp** which spoke of a sphere of influence that brought God's light to others (Mt. 5:15-16; Rev. 1:20; 2:5; 11:3-6; Zech. 4:2; Is. 62:1; Jn. 5:35).
- C. **Bridegroom:** All these virgins had revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. This parable speaks of those who **went out to meet**, or who encountered, Jesus as the Bridegroom God.
¹⁷ ***The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17)***
- D. **Then:** We ask, "When is then?" The word "then" points back to the end of the age theme just emphasized in Mt. 24. This is when the kingdom functions like virgins meeting the Bridegroom.
- E. In this parable, Jesus' warning is that the wise can become foolish if they neglect to continue to cultivate intimacy with Jesus by going out to meet the Bridegroom (Mt. 25:1), Jesus.

III. FIVE WISE VIRGINS: ACQUIRED OIL AS THEIR LAMPS OF INFLUENCE SHONE

² *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. (Mt. 25:2-4)*

- A. The “oil” speaks of the presence of the Spirit touching our heart as we spend time with God (2 Cor 1:21; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). The oil of the Holy Spirit touches our hearts in different ways:
1. *It tenderizes our heart*, enabling us to feel more of God’s desire for us.
 2. *It enlarges our desire* for Him by encountering His desire for us.
 3. *It illuminates our understanding* with revelation of God’s beauty.
 4. *It imparts zeal for righteousness*, which helps us in our struggle with besetting sins.
- B. The foolish took their lamps (sphere of influence), but **took no oil**. In other words, they pursued activity and influence as their first priority, instead of acquiring oil in their relationship with Jesus.
- C. The wise virgins **took oil** in their vessels with their lamps. In other words, they pursued acquiring oil as their first priority before seeking to expand and network their influence.
- D. Our relationship with Jesus is our most important “dream,” not our sphere of influence. Zechariah’s prophecy of two “sons of oil” includes the two witnesses (Zech 4:14; Rev. 11:4).

IV. THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY IN THE END TIMES: THE THREEFOLD CRY

⁵ *While the Bridegroom delayed, they all slept.* ⁶ *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. (Mt. 25:5-7)*

- A. At the midnight hour of history, forerunners will cry out with a threefold message to the nations.
- B. First, “**Jesus is coming**” refers to His manifest victory and judgment. Jesus will “come to us” by progressively releasing waves of revival that win the lost and transform society. These waves will build and intensify more and more until Jesus comes in the sky to rapture the Church.
- C. Second, Jesus is **coming as a Bridegroom God** with deep desire for relationship with us.
- D. Third, we must **go out to meet Him** or to make the necessary effort to position ourselves in worship, obedience, prayer, the Word, and fasting to encounter Jesus.
- E. They all slept and all trimmed their lamps. Sleeping in this parable is not bad. The wise and unwise both sleep (Mk. 4:27). This speaks of cultivating oil in the natural processes of life. We sustain intimacy with Jesus in the midst of the rigors, routine and mundaneness of life.

⁵ *They all slept...⁷ all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. (Mt. 25:5-7)*

V. JESUS EMPHASIZED THE GREAT NEED TO CULTIVATE OIL IN THE END TIMES

A. The foolish ministries recognize their mistake in neglecting oil.

⁸ *The foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.”⁹ The wise answered, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” (Mt. 25:8-9)*

B. Many “ministry lamps” will go out because they will lack the spiritual vitality of the Spirit’s oil. They asked the wise to give them oil to “bolster” their ministries. The wise understood their limitation knowing that their spiritual history and spiritual preparedness is not transferrable. Christian “self-help” and “pop psychology” sermons will not meet the need of the hour in that day. In that day, we must be a voice that pursues the truth in our secret life, and not just an echo.

C. Jesus exhorts us to “buy oil,” to engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring intimacy with God. We do not earn this, but invest ourselves in a costly way to receive it.

¹⁸ *I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich... (Rev. 3:18)*

VI. BEING PREPARED FOR THE NEXT WAVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

¹⁰ *While they went to buy, the Bridegroom came [progressive seasons of revival], and those who were ready went in with Him to the wedding; and the door [of opportunity for usefulness] was shut.¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us!”¹² He answered, “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.” (Mt. 25:10-12)*

A. This passage is not a warning about losing salvation. Jesus neither knew nor recognized them as those who engaged with Him as the Bridegroom. When Jesus said, “I do not **know** you,” He was describing their lack of intimacy with Him, not their lack of salvation. He did not call them evil, wicked or cursed (Mt. 24:48; 25:26, 41); neither did He say that He never knew them (Mt. 7:23).

B. The Jewish custom involved celebrating a wedding for several nights (ideally seven nights for a wealthy family). Those closest to the married couple were invited on the first night and subsequently on the following nights. The “waves” of the Spirit activity are building up to the fullness of the end-time revival culminating at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).

C. Only those who were **ready** by being close to the Bridegroom went in to the celebration. This speaks of those who will be prepared to be powerfully used by God in the end-time revival. Only those who were ready went in to celebrate on the **first** night and, therefore, the nights that followed. The others cried out, “Open to us!” – give us a place of usefulness in end-time revival.

D. Many will miss future opportunities to be used in their fullest way. Jesus’ advice is **to watch**, or to open our heart, to develop intimacy with Him as the Bridegroom. The most substantial way to acquire oil is by feeding on God’s Word. This positions our heart before God to freely receive.

¹³ *Watch...for you know neither the day nor hour...the Son of Man is coming. (Mt. 25:13)*