

Lessons from the Ten Virgins

Rick Railston

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Matthew 24 has been one of the most read chapters in the Bible. When I came into the Church in the mid-sixties, it was the focus of many articles and booklets and correspondence courses and sermons because it gave the timeline for the end. And if you look at my Bible on end where—I've had the same Bible since I came in the Church—so in Matthew 24 all the gold leaf on the edge is just worn off. That one Scripture as we go back to it often. We certainly did in those days.

And so many times we focus on Matthew 24, but Christ's message in chapter 24 doesn't end with the chapter because I think we all know that man installed chapter breaks and divided the Bible into verses. And Christ's message just continues on from Matthew 24 into Matthew 25. And you remember the question at the beginning of Matthew 24 is the disciples came and said, "Show us the time of the end. When is it all going to wrap up?" And Christ began to speak and it carries on into Matthew chapter 25.

Let's go to Matthew 25 now. And if you have a bookmark or a ribbon in your Bible, you might want to put it there because we're going to be going—focusing on Matthew 25 and going to other places and then coming back. But let's start in verse 1 of Matthew chapter 25. Remember this is referencing the very subject that was started in the beginning of Matthew 24. Matthew 25 verse 1, it says:

Matthew 25:1: Then (KJV)

The New International says: "At that time." What time? Well, the end—the subject of Christ's dissertation.

Matthew 25:1. [At that time] shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, (KJV)

Now when Christ says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like," and then He goes on to give a parable or an explanation, our antenna should go up because we want to know more about the Kingdom because we want to be in the Kingdom. So He's telling us something very important. He says:

Matthew 25:1b. [It's like] then virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. (KJV)

So He divides the ten into two categories—the wise ones and the foolish ones.

Matthew 25:3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5) While the bridegroom tarried [or delayed as the Greek can mean], they all

slumbered and slept. 6) And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom [comes]; go out to meet him. 7) Then all those virgins arose, [they] trimmed their lamps. 8) And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps (KJV)

The King James says, "[have] gone out," but the margin in the King James and virtually every modern translation says, "our lamps are going out." In other words, they realized it before they totally ran out of oil.

Going on in verse 9:

Matthew 25:9. But the wise answered, saying, *Not so*; (KJV)

We would say today, "No way! It's not going to happen."

Matthew 25:9b. lest there be not enough for us and you: but go rather to [those] that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10) And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11) Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12) But he answered and said, [Truly] I say unto you, I know you not. (KJV)

And then in verse 13, the admonition:

Matthew 25:13. Watch therefore, for [you] know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man [comes]. (KJV)

There is a message about this parable regarding the ten virgins and the message is for us today. So if you want to put a title on the sermon, it is *The Lessons from the Ten Virgins*. And there are many lessons. We're going to cover seven today that apply to us at these end times.

Now the First Lesson, it is obvious.

All the virgins started a journey to meet the groom.

They all started together—all ten of them. The foolish along with the wise were walking down a path to meet the groom (verse 1). Ten virgins took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. They went on a path or on a way to meet the bridegroom.

This reminds me of Acts chapter 19 verse 23. Let's turn there. Keep your place in Matthew 25. But we'll go to Acts 19 verse 23 because this is one of the Scriptures that struck me when I was first being called into the Church because it tells us something very important about the path that we have chosen. Acts 19 verse 23, it says:

Acts 19:23. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way [referring to Christianity]. (KJV)

It is a way. It is a path. It is a type of life. And so this ties in with this parable because they were walking down a path to meet the bridegroom. And so, we are told here that Christianity is a way and if we endure to the end, it will end with the marriage of Jesus Christ down at the end of that path. We are on a way or a path to marry Christ. We have to follow the right path and we have to endure to the end. We can't just quit and sit down by the side of the road. We must continue on on that path.

With that in mind, let's go to Matthew chapter 7 now and we're going to read verses 13 through the beginning of verse 16. Matthew chapter 7—very familiar Scripture of the Sermon on the Mount—Christ is talking about this way or this path that a Christian follows. Matthew 7 verse 13, He says:

Matthew 7:13. Enter [you] in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that [leads] to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (KJV)

Matthew 7 now verse 14, He says:

Matthew 7: 14. Because strait *is* the gate, (KJV)

Notice this!

Matthew 7:14b. narrow *is* the way, (KJV)

That's what we read in Acts 19.

Matthew 7:14b. narrow *is* the way, which [leads] unto life, and few there be that find it. (KJV)

Of course, when these words were said, not many had been called.

Verse 15:

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16) [You] shall know them by their fruits. (KJV)

And then we go on to the familiar Scriptures about knowing people by their fruits. Christ is admonishing us that false prophets, wolves in sheep's clothing are there to get us off the path, to get us turned aside.

So summarizing the First Point:

The wise and the foolish started together.

And today the Church is on that same path—now I mean the greater of Church of God. God's people all over the world are walking down a path that was discussed or mentioned in Matthew 25 verse 1.

That's the First Point:

All the virgins started the journey together to meet the bridegroom.

The Second Point:

The journey lasted longer than they all thought.

Verse 5:

Matthew 25:5. While the bridegroom tarried, (KJV)

The New International translates that, "The bridegroom was a long time in coming."

And I think all of us the Church today would agree to that. Many thought Christ would come decades ago. Even recently, many thought Christ would come in 2008. And Christ is a long time in coming from our perspective because we want Him to come soon.

Now, some people are going to use the fact that He doesn't come when they want Him to as an excuse to go back into the world. Now remember Matthew 24 and 25 are together. Look back Matthew 24, just a few verses, to verses 48 and 49. Many will use this as an excuse to go back into the world. Matthew 24 verse 48:

Matthew 24:48. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord [delays] his coming; 49) And shall begin to smite *his* fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; (KJV)

And then it goes on. The fact is that some will use the delay, if you want to call it that or the tarrying as the King James calls it, as an excuse to go back into the world. "Hey, we got more time. Let's eat, drink, be merry. And then we'll straighten it out later." Some people have done that. They have done that.

The fact is that Christ is not going to come as fast as we want Him to. We all would like Him to have come yesterday. But Christ is not going to come as fast as we want Him to. And there's a reason behind that.

Let's go to Ezra chapter 9 and verse 4. This is talking about the sins of Jerusalem, but this certainly applies today to the sins of modern day Israel and the sins of the world as a whole. And the description of the people's reaction, I think, describes God's people today who want Christ to return. Ezekiel 9 and verse 4:

Ezekiel 9:4. And the LORD said unto him, (KJV)

Now he's referring to this cherub in verse 3.

Ezekiel 9:4. And the LORD said unto the [cherub], Go through the [middle] of the city, through the [middle] of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men [and the women] that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the [middle] thereof. (KJV)

And I think all God's people sigh and cry when we witness the evils in this society. You see the media stars, the sports stars, the Tiger Woods, and the horrible examples that are set, the hypocrisy and the lies of politicians, what we see on television, what we see advertised in movies. I don't go to movies that often, but maybe once a year. But you see them advertised on TV or in magazines and it's just horrible. And God's people, I think talk to one another and sigh and cry for the sins of the nation.

Let's go to Psalm 94 and read verses 3 and 4 because the psalmist here is agonizing about Christ's coming and taking care of the problems, taking care of the evils in the society. Psalm 94 verse 3, the psalmist cries out:

Psalm 94:3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? (KJV)

And we look around and people that are committing all kinds of unspeakable evils seem to triumph. They seem to prosper. They're wealthy beyond measure. They're successful beyond measure. And many of them get that way through lying and deceit and evil. And so the psalmist says:

Psalm 94:3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? (KJV)

Going on in verse 4:

Psalm 94:4. *How long* shall they utter *and* speak (KJV)

The King James says "hard things." The Hebrew means *arrogant things*, strutting and posturing. Sometimes you want to puke watching the politicians up there posturing because you know they're lying through their teeth with their posture.

Psalm 93:4b. [They'll] utter and speak [arrogant] things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? (KJV)

And the psalmist is saying, "How long? How long, God, are you going to let this go on?"

Then let's jump to the New Testament. Revelation 6 and we're going read verses 9 and 10 looking at a time and looking in a vision and metaphorically to those who have been martyred. And they're asking the same question, "How long?" Revelation 6 verse 9:

Revelation 6:9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the [lives] of [those] that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: (KJV)

Verse 10:

Revelation 6:10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, [do you] not judge and avenge our blood on [those] that dwell on the earth? (KJV)

And they're asking—they're already dead. This is a vision understand. They're just saying metaphorically, "How long is it going to be? When are You going to come? We need our blood avenged. And when are You going to restore all things and straighten the world out?"

Now the Worldwide Church of God taught and thought it would be over in 1972, and then later in 1975; and then some as recently as 2008 and then 2003 or '04. And people who set dates, I think one of the lessons is don't set dates. But people did and thought it would happen and then Christ did not come and once again, the journey is lasting longer than we thought.

I remember a minister, a pastor in the Boston Church, the man that ordained me an elder, gave a sermon. It's one of those sermons you never forget. Every once in a while we come across a sermon to remember for the rest of your life. And he gave a sermon in 1973 and the title of it was *We Will Want Christ to Come Long Before He Does*. Boy, if that was true in 1973, how much truer is it today?

And he went through how God will create conditions in the world that we are going to want and beg and scream for Christ to return. And He's not going to come until He's ready to come, but we will want Him to come a lot sooner than He does. That's to teach us some lessons, to show us the value of Christ being on the earth as opposed to human government on the earth. But rest assured, as the ten virgins, found out it will be longer than we wish; and the journey lasted longer than they thought. And there's a lesson for us today.

The Third Lesson, this is one that's extremely important. This is a theme throughout this parable.

The five wise planned for a long journey.
The five foolish didn't plan at all.

The wise planned for a long journey; the five foolish gave it no thought. Notice verse 3:

Matthew 25:3. They that *were* foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: (KJV)

Because they were walking at night, they had to have light. And the symbolism there, of course, is we're walking in a very dark world. The world is in darkness. The world is brought under darkness by Satan the Devil.

Verse 4, it says:

Matthew 25:4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
(KJV)

They planned in advance for a long journey. The foolish had oil in their lamps, but not enough for a long journey.

Let me read from The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8 page 513 referring to this parable. Quote:

The lamps here are either small oil fed lamps or, more plausibly, torches whose rags would need periodic dousing with oil to keep them burning. In either case, the prudent would bring along a flask with an additional supply of oil.

So if you had a stick with a bunch of rags on it, you just take the flask and pour more oil it before the fire went out and it would soak the rags and the fire would continue to burn. Therefore, they could go on a longer journey and still have light.

The wise planned in advance because they brought a flask along with them with the oil. The foolish didn't plan at all! They just had either the lamp or the stick with the rags on it. It was burning, but they gave it no thought that they might be in need of some more oil down the way because it's a longer journey than they thought. They reacted at the last minute with no planning. There's a message there.

Let's go to Luke chapter 14 and read a few Scriptures that we cover as a matter of course when we counsel somebody for baptism. We're going to read verses 28 through 33. And we use these verses to make sure people count the cost of what they're getting into before they're baptized. But this applies to the ten virgins. Luke 14 verse 28, Christ says:

Luke 14:28. For which of you, intending to build a tower, [sits] not down first, and [counts] the cost, whether he [has] *sufficient* [means or money] to finish *it*? (KJV)

Verse 29:

Luke 14:29. Lest after he [has] laid the foundation, and is not able to finish *it*, all that behold *it* begin to mock him, 30) Saying, This man began to build, [but he] was not able to finish. (KJV)

Just as the five virgins started a journey but they weren't able to finish because they didn't have enough oil.

Verse 31:

Luke 14:31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, [sits] not down first, and [consults] whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that [comes] against him with twenty thousand? 32) Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he [sends] an [ambassador], and [desires] conditions of peace. (KJV)

And so Christ then makes the point in verse 33.

Luke 14:33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that [forsakes] not all that he [has], he cannot be my disciple. (KJV)

You see we must learn to count the cost of going forward and we must plan accordingly. Whether you're being baptized or whether you're already marching down this road to meet the bridegroom, we must count the cost and plan accordingly.

Now in 1972, as we approached 1972, I can remember two-three years, in some cases four years before, people stopped planning. I know people who didn't get their teeth fixed because they knew Christ was coming in 1972. They didn't need to spend the money. "Let's spend the money somewhere else." They didn't repair the roof. They just put a bucket under the leak, knowing that "we're not going to need that in another year or two or whatever." Many didn't buy insurance. "Why should I buy insurance, Christ is going to be here." It's sad to say, many people charged items, took out loans to buy things that they knew they couldn't pay for or afford, but they figured "Well, Christ is going to be here and I'm not going to have to pay this back." So that happened. Many did not plan for retirement. "If Christ doesn't come in '72, surely he'll come in '73 or '74 or '75. So there's no need to plan to walk down that road any longer than a certain point. And so, we see that there was poor or non-existent planning for their future when Christ delayed His coming. So many people were caught flat-footed in the mid-seventies.

Now, how does that apply today? Well, a year ago about this time, I heard somebody say, "You don't need to plan for the Feast in 2009 because we're not going to be here. You don't need to make a hotel reservation or rent a car or buy airplane tickets or whatever because we're not going to be here." And I saw this individual at the Feast and said with a smile on my face, "Here we are!" And kind a sheepish look, but the point I'm making is that we have to plan for a longer journey than maybe what we as individuals would like.

Some people today are not taking care of their health the way they should. "I just know Christ is going to be here, so I don't have to worry about my weight. I don't have to worry about my blood pressure. He's going to be here very, very soon."

It reminds me of my hero when I was a young kid growing up in Texas. Baseball was a big thing back then. And the New York Yankees were my heroes. And Mickey Mantle was my hero of heroes who played center field for the New York

Yankees in the 50's. And if he hadn't been injured, he probably would have been the best hitter ever in the history of baseball. But Mickey Mantle lived a hard life. He drank too much. He didn't care of himself, died at an early age. I don't think he was even sixty. And he said once—I'm quoting from him now: "If I knew I would have lived this long, I would have taken better care of myself."

And people are not doing that today because they feel they won't have to suffer the consequences of poor health decisions because Christ will have come. "He will be here. So if He's not going to come in 2009 or 2010, surely it'll be 2012." And maybe it will and maybe it won't. But you see the wise plan for a long journey. The foolish did not and they were caught up short. Again today many are not planning for retirement. And the foolish see no need to take heed that it might be a long journey, longer than they thought.

Let's go to Revelation 3 and verse 17. A very familiar Scripture that talks about the mindset or the attitude of those living in these end days, those living in these end times. Revelation 3 and verse 17 talking about the Laodicean Era:

Revelation 3:17. Because [you say], I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; (KJV)

"I don't need to plan. I don't need to prepare. I don't need to think in advance." "Have need of nothing," and Christ says:

Revelation 3:17b. and [don't you know] that [you're] wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (KJV)

And that applies to the five foolish because they realized too late—remember they said in verse 8, "Our lamps are going out. Oops! We didn't plan. We made a mistake." And Christ is bringing that to our attention. They were sitting there wringing their hands at the last minute knowing they were in trouble because they didn't plan.

Now let's go to Proverbs 29 and verse 18 and see a principle that applies to what we're talking about. Proverbs 29 and verse 18, again a very familiar Scripture, but it applies to having vision and a plan walking down this path. Proverbs 29 and verse 18 tells us:

Proverbs 29:18. Where *there is* no vision, (KJV)

What happens?

Proverbs 29:18b. the people perish: (KJV)

And five of those were knocking at the door, pounding and screaming at the door, and they were locked out and they were going to perish.

Proverbs 29:18 continued. but he that [keeps] the law, happy *is* he. (KJV)

The word *vision* is Strong's 2377 and Baker in his book—very good book by the way—The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament says the following about this word:

The primary essence of this word is not so much the vision or the dream itself as the message conveyed.

The message conveyed in a vision that we have whether it's the vision that came to the prophets in a dream sometimes or a vision that we have in our mind about how we're going to plan for the future.

So:

Proverbs 29:18. Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: (KJV)

Then what is the vision, the message, the understanding that we should have today? What is it? What is the vision we should hold in the forefront of our minds? Let's go to Colossians 1 and read verse 26 and 27. This is the crux, the essence, of what we should be planning to do every day of our lives. Colossians 1 verse 26 and 27 talking about a mystery—the New Testament talks about many mysteries (working on a sermon on that.) But there are many mysteries mentioned in the New Testament. This is the prime one. Verse 26:

Colossians 1:26. *Even* the mystery which [has] been hid from ages and from generations, (KJV)

Not understood until this time when this was written!

Colossians 1:26b. but now is made manifest [or apparent] to his saints: (KJV)

Verse 27:

Colossians 1:27. To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is (KJV)

This is a mystery!

Colossians 1:27b. Christ in you, the hope of glory: (KJV)

You see throughout the Old Testament dispensation there was no talk about God living in us—certainly none living in the average person of the Old Testament. We know God's spirit did come to certain individuals that He called during the Old Testament dispensation, but it was not available to the broad majority of people.

Today Christ is calling the firstfruits. And we understand that it is Christ living in us through His holy spirit that makes it possible for us to be Christians, to make it possible for us to be in the Family of God now and as spirit beings in the future.

And so, why is Christ in us? What is the purpose for Christ being in us, we might ask? He's given us his spirit and He's given us the power. He's given us his mind. But what is the point of it all? We find that in Ephesians 4 and verse 13. This is the vision we have to have. This is the vision the foolish did not have. Ephesians 4 and verse 13, this is what our job is here and now. Ephesians 4 verse 13 says:

Ephesians 4:13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, (KJV)

We haven't gotten there yet, by a long shot!

Ephesians 4:13b. and of the knowledge of the Son of God, (KJV)

This is the vision. This is the purpose for having God's spirit.

Ephesians 4:13 continued. unto a perfect man [or woman], unto the measure of the stature of the [fullness] of Christ: (KJV)

Our purpose is to develop through the power of His spirit as physical human beings to be like Jesus Christ, to have His mind, His spirit, His attitude, His words, His deeds, His actions, to be like Christ, to have Christ live in us to the point that when we interplay with other people, people can look at an individual and say, "That's Christ speaking. That's Christ acting. That person is very converted, not a carnal human being." We must change to be like Jesus Christ. That is the vision we have to have.

And if we have that, we can plan. We can endure down that path. We must all plan for a long journey as the five wise did. But we can't let up on the urgency of preparing ourselves to be Bride of Christ every day because we as individuals our end of our journey could be tomorrow. It could be tonight and we just won't wake up. We could find out we have cancer next week. And our journey might be over in a very short period of time.

So we have to plan for a long journey. This is summarizing Point Number Three. And not let up on the urgency of preparing ourselves to be the Bride of Christ.

Now let's look at the Fourth Lesson we need to learn. The Fourth One is:

They all slept. The wise slept and the foolish slept.

Verse 5:

Matthew 25:5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. (KJV)

They all did!

I asked the question: What causes one to sleep? What causes you to want to go to sleep? Let's go to Daniel 7 and verse 25. This applies to us today. Daniel 7 verse 25, it says:

Daniel 7:25. And he (KJV)

(Referring to the head of the false church):

Daniel 7:25b. shall speak *great* words against the most High, (KJV)

But notice this:

Daniel 7:25 continued. and shall wear out the saints of the most High,
(KJV)

Wear them out! Now this is talking about the end days. And *being worn out* means to be fatigued, to be tired. And I think all of us would have to admit that we're tired. We're physically tired as we get older. We don't have the stamina we used to have. But also the trials and tribulations make us spiritually tired.

I talked to a woman the other day and she said, "I'm just whipped. It seems like it's just one trial after another after another trial like waves of the sea washing over." She said, "When is this going to stop" because Satan keeps piling them on and piling them on and piling them on. Some the world does. Some we bring on ourselves. But the fact is one trial after another after another leads to fatigue.

And my favorite football coach of all time, Vince Lombardi, said:

Fatigue makes cowards of us all.

When we're tired, we become afraid. When we're tired, we become crabby. When we're tired, we become irritable. When we're tired, we lose patience. When we're tired, we don't have the love of God as much as we should. And so Satan wants to wear us out so that we begin to not operate through and by God's holy spirit but by that other spirit.

Proverbs 24 and verse 10 has an admonition for all of us when we get tired, when we get fatigued. Proverbs 24 and verse 10, it's a principle that we need to keep in mind. Solomon says:

Proverbs 24:10. If [you] faint in the day of adversity, [your] strength is small. (KJV)

That's why Vince Lombardi, when he coached the Green Bay Packers back in the sixties and they won three Super Bowls—actually before the Super Bowl, but won the first one. The fact is he conditioned those men. Some would call brutal in the summer training-fall training. Because he knew in the fourth quarter at the end of the game if they weren't in condition, they were going to fail. It's easy to give up. It's easy to quit. But his guys were so well conditioned that in the fourth quarter they were strong when others were weak. And they won games that way.

And this is the principle. When adversity comes and we faint, we're not very strong. So as far as planning for the future, we have to be strong. We have to plan to get strong. We have to take the steps necessary to be strong.

But in this Fourth Point, the truth is that all of us have slept in the past. I'll be honest with you. In my forty-three or forty-five years in the Church, there have been times when I was spiritually asleep. I was just treading water spiritually. I didn't study the way I should have. I didn't fast as often as I should have. I didn't pray with the fervency that I should have. And I just got interested in other things. Let the job or other things just took too much of my time and you just tread water for a period of time. And we can't do that.

All of us have been spiritually tired in the past. All of us have been spiritually fatigued in the past. But as we get close to the end, there's going to be a separation. They all slept. We all have. But there's a time to wake up and now is the time to wake up!

2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 13 admonishes us again not to be tired about doing the things that we should be doing. 2 Thessalonians 3 and verse 13, we're told:

2 Thessalonians 3:13. But [you], brethren, be not weary in well doing. (KJV)

Because Paul knew that when you get tired, you're not as eager to serve. You're not as eager to give of your time and your energy to serve other people when you are tired. And therefore, he's telling us, "Don't be weary in well doing. Don't let fatigue take you out of the game. Don't let fatigue stop you from serving and giving and sacrificing."

There's only one solution to fight weariness and fatigue—one solution. And all ten of them slept and we need to learn a lesson from that. The solution is in Philippians 4 and verse 13. I think you know the answer to this. The strength comes not from human strength. The strength comes not from human will. The strength comes from God's spirit in us. Philippians 4 and verse 13, it says:

Philippians 4:13. I can do all things (KJV)

Not some things, but:

Philippians 4:13b. all things through Christ (KJV)

And what does Christ do?

Philippians 4:13 continued. [He strengthens] me. (KJV)

And we have to get down on our knees daily and fast often for the strength we need when we start to slip and fall, when we get tired, when we get worn out.

So the Fourth Point is:

All ten slept. They slumbered and slept.

Now we come to the Fifth Point. Now there's a dividing of the ten. The five foolish turned aside. The five wise did not. The five wise kept on the path. The five foolish left the path and turned aside. Verse 10:

Matthew 25:10. And while they went to buy, (KJV)

They got off the path to go buy something. And the five who planned, the five wise were still on the path when they met the bridegroom coming the other way.

They got off the path in order to buy. And what were they doing? They were searching for those who promised what they lacked. They didn't have oil. So they were out searching. They left the path and they're out searching for people who promised them what they didn't have.

That's a very important principle to apply today because there are people today leaving the path, searching for things, which the five foolish did. Look at Isaiah 30 and we're going to read verses 9 and 10, a prophecy. Isaiah 30 verses 9 and 10, an early fulfillment and a later fulfillment. Isaiah 30 verse 9, we're told that:

Isaiah 30:9. That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: (KJV)

Isaiah 30 verse 10:

Isaiah 30:10. Which say to the seers [the speakers, the prophets], See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, [but] speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits: (KJV)

And so that is happening today. Many people are going off the path seeking *smooth things*, seeking things they want to hear, seeking things that sound good.

And in the New Testament the same theme applies. Look at 2 Timothy chapter 4 and we're going to read verses 3 and 4. Paul is warning this young minister and warning us today about this same syndrome—of turning aside to seek things that people lack and they're actually being led astray and they go into a ditch. 2 Timothy 4 verses 3 and 4, I'm going to read it out of the NIV.

2 Timothy 4:3. For the time will come when men [and women] will not put up with sound doctrine. (NIV)

They won't put up it. They don't want to hear it!

2 Timothy 4:3b. Instead, to suit their own desires,

That's selfish—want for themselves!

2 Timothy 4:3 continued. they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

Verse 4:

2 Timothy 4:4. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (NIV)

Just as the five foolish realized that they didn't have something, they went aside, they turned aside and they started going after things that they thought they lacked. And there are people today who go aside and turn off the path.

We cannot buy or borrow our way into God's Kingdom. We just can't. Did you ever think about that? You just can't do that. You can't prepare at the last minute. You can't get ready at the last minute. "Oh, our lamps are going out. What are we going to do? We're not ready." You can't generate what should occur over months and weeks and years—you can't generate it in a matter of a very short period of time. They neglected to plan. They neglected to prepare.

We must be faithful to the truth and we must apply it every day in our lives. We can't just leave it to the last minute, because if we do, we're going to get off the path. We're going to get confused. We're going to search for things that sound good to the ears, sound good to the eyes, sounds good to the pride of life and then we've gone astray.

So the Fifth Point is:

The five foolish turned aside. The five wise did not.

Which leads us to the Sixth Point:

The foolish thought they could get into the marriage supper on the coattails of the five wise.

They thought that the five wise would drag them, help them get into the Kingdom of God. Verses 6 through 9 of Matthew 25:

Matthew 25:6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom [comes]; go out to meet him. (KJV)

This was after they had awoken and all had slumbered and slept.

Verse 7:

Matthew 25:7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (KJV)

The Greek word for *trimmed* means to put in order or to make ready or to prepare. They prepared their lamps. And maybe they poured the last drop of oil on their lamps—the five foolish. And it's just barely smoldering and they realized, "Oops. The bridegroom's coming we can go very far!"

Verse 8:

Matthew 25:8. And the foolish said unto the wise, (KJV)

Notice their reaction!

Matthew 25:8b. Give [unto] us your oil; (KJV)

In other words, they were relying on another human being to get them where they needed to go. And the wise answered and said, "No way! It's not going to happen. We have oil for ourselves. We don't have enough for all of us."

And the message here is we can't get to the marriage supper on the coattails of a mate. We can't get to the marriage supper on the coattails of an apostle. We can't get to the marriage supper on the coattails of a pastor general or a minister or anybody else. We can't rely on another human being to get us into the Kingdom of God because God is saying, "You have to do that between you and Me and between Me and My Son Jesus Christ."

We cannot get into the Kingdom just because we warm a seat in a certain place. And yet that is being taught today. "If you're with us, if you tithe to this group or you attend with us, then we will make sure you get to the place of safety. I will lead you to the place of safety because, after all, I'm going to train the two witnesses." And so you see what that does is foster an attitude that if you just warm a seat, that's all you need to do. If you just tithe in the right place, that's all you need to do. And Christ says, as we're going to find out, just the opposite! It's much, more than just warming a seat.

Here's what we need to be doing. Look at Philippians 2 and we're going to read verses 12 through 15. We have to realize that our salvation depends on our relationship with God and Jesus Christ and what we wind up doing. Philippians 2 verse 12, Paul is saying to the Church in Philippi and by extension to us today:

Philippians 2:12. Wherefore, my beloved, as [you] have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, (KJV)

I hope we realize that in many cases the Church of God today, the greater Church of God today, is getting kind of like it was in the first century Church. There are scattered groups. People meeting in homes. People meeting in halls. And they're scattered.

And Paul is saying to them, "I can't be with you right now." And he says, "But you obeyed in my presence. But I know you're obeying in my absence too." But notice what he says:

Philippians 2:12b. work out your own salvation (KJV)

It doesn't depend on another man or a mate or an apostle.

Philippians 2:12b. work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (KJV)

Notice what he says in verse 13:

Philippians 2:13. For it is God which [works] in you (KJV)

"Christ in you," as we read earlier.

Philippians 2:13b. both to will (KJV)

That means to have the desire.

Philippians 2:13 continued. and to do (KJV)

That means to perform the works.

Philippians 2:13 continued. of *his* good pleasure. 14) Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15) That [you] may be blameless and harmless, (KJV)

By our thoughts, by our actions.

Philippians 2:15. That you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, (KJV)

Meaning: God can't come to us and say, "Well, you did this or you did that. Shame on you!" Without rebuke, God would say, "Welcome into the Kingdom. You love Me. You obey Me."

And he goes on to say:

Philippians 2:15b. [you do this] without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, (KJV)

The whole world is crooked and perverse today!

Philippians 2:15 continued. among whom [you] shine as lights in the world; (KJV)

You see we stand alone before God in judgment. We stand alone before God. There's nobody standing besides us. We're not getting in on the coattails of anybody else. Peter said—we won't turn there—1 Peter 4 and verse 17, he says:

1 Peter 4:17. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: (KJV)

He says that we're being judged now and we have to realize that. We're being judged now as to whether or not we will be invited or led in to the marriage

supper or where the door is going to be closed and we're going to be on the outside knocking to come in. We're being judged now not by where we warm a seat, but our relationship with the Father and Son and our actions in this life in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.

So the Sixth Point is:

The five foolish thought they could get in on the coattails of somebody else.

And that is absolutely not true! And they tried, but they failed.

Now the Seventh Point—and this is something that maybe you haven't thought about before. It struck me when I was doing the study on this subject.

The five who were locked out were still virgins.

Did you think about that? Look at verse 11 Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12) But he said, [Truly I say unto you, I [don't know] you. (KJV)

But yet they were still virgins!

Now the definition of a virgin is one who has not had sexual intercourse. And it can be male or it can be female. Now in today's society, you mention the word *virgin* and what pops up in most minds is a woman, but that is not the definition of the word. It can be male or it can be female.

And the parable here mentions no sex. We tend to think of women. I think most people would, but a virgin is a virgin. It could be male or female. And so the virgins did not have illicit sexual relations. They were not married in the physical sense in this parable, I mean. They didn't have physical relations with another human being.

But the spiritual application is that the ten virgins did not have spiritual relationships with the world. In other words, they tithed; they attended services; they kept the Sabbath; they kept the Holy Days; they fasted; they probably prayed and studied to a degree. They were still virgins. And yet they were locked out.

What is God trying to tell us here? What is Christ trying to get through to us by telling us that five virgins are not going to make the Kingdom of God? That's a scary thought! But it says clearly they were on the outside knocking and screaming and probably pleading and yet there were virgins. They didn't make it!

They were rather called *foolish* virgins. Now the Greek word for *foolish* is the same used in Matthew chapter 7—we won't turn there. But remember in verse 24 Christ was giving a parable about a wise man that built his house on the rock?

Well, that same Greek word was used in verse 26 when He described a *foolish* man building his house on the sand. Same word: *foolish* man building house on sand or *foolish* virgins, five of them.

They were foolish because they lacked something essential for meeting Christ. They were virgins, but they lacked something. They didn't have something.

Now as far as the outward appearance, I'm sure they appeared as though they were ready to enter into the Kingdom. They attended the Feasts. They attended Sabbath Services. They did all the visible things that might lead one to believe that they could be into the Kingdom of God, but they lacked something essential. And therefore, they were locked out.

Look at verse 12:

Matthew 25:12. [He] answered and said [unto them], (KJV)

They're pounding on the door.

Matthew 25:12b. Truly I say unto you, I [don't] know you. (KJV)

Now that's different than what He said—remember in the Parable of the Tares in Matthew 13? He told them, "I never knew you." Now He's not saying that here. He's saying, "I don't know you." What He's saying is, "I don't recognize you right now. When you're out there pounding, I don't recognize you. I don't know who you are." The implication is that He did know them before, but He doesn't know them now.

Now what would cause that to happen? They lost something! He recognized them before because they had something. But as soon as they get toward the end and they went aside and they tried to buy oil. And then they heard that Christ was returning and they rushed to the marriage supper. And they found the door shut and they were pounding on the door screaming and begging, Christ is saying, "I don't recognize you."

And the only way He wouldn't recognize them if they'd lost something. If they had not had intercourse with the world, but were still locked out, what had they lost? They were still virgins. They didn't have intercourse with the world, but they lost something.

Looking at the greater Church of God today, I believe it is found in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and chapter 13. We're going to read 1 Corinthians 12 at the end of the chapter verse 31 and then go on to the third verse of chapter 13. 1 Corinthians 12 talks about spiritual gifts—gift of healing, gift of tongues, of prophecy and so on. And Paul says those are good gifts to desire, but then he ends the chapter, 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 31, by saying something different as he gets on into chapter 13. 1 Corinthians 12 verse 31, he says:

1 Corinthians 12:31: But covet earnestly the best gifts: (KJV)

The ones he had covered earlier in the chapter. And he says:

1 Corinthians 12:31b. and yet [show] I unto you a more excellent way. (KJV)

Chapter 13 verse 1:

1 Corinthians 13:1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, (KJV)

Meaning: I have the gift of prophecy, of inspired speaking or even seeing into the future. He says:

1 Corinthians 13:1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and [I don't] have [love], I am as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2) And [he says] though I have *the gift of prophecy*, (KJV)

And there are some people that have the gift of prophecy. In other words, they can go through the Bible and put it all together like a big puzzle and figure it out. Or they have the ability to be—prophecy can also mean inspired speaking. They're outstanding speakers. They're charismatic. They can entertain. They can tell you stories.

1 Corinthians 13:2. [He says, if] I have *that gift*, and [he says, I] understand all mysteries, (KJV)

"I understand science. I understand history and archeology and all of that," he says.

1 Corinthians 13:2b. [He says, I have] all knowledge;

Quote the Bible verse, chapter. You know *walking encyclopedia* about the Bible.

1 Corinthians 13:2 continued. and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, (KJV)

If we had somebody in the Church today that could move a mountain, command a mountain to move or lay hands on somebody and they were on their deathbed and would rise up, the Church would kneel down at their feet! They would worship a man.

He says, "Even if I had that kind of faith!" He says, "I am not diminished."

1 Corinthians 13:2 continued. [He says,] I am nothing. (KJV)

Verse 3:

1 Corinthians 13:3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, (KJV)

"I am generous to a fault."

1 Corinthians 13:3b. and though I give my body to be burned, (KJV)

"I am will to be martyred," he said. If you don't have love, if love is not the motivation for the martyrdom or love is not the motivation for giving your goods, he says,

1 Corinthians 13:3 continued. it [profits] me nothing. (KJV)

You could be a martyr to have a reputation after you die. You could be a martyr so that people will write about you for years and centuries. If your motivation is to seek recognition even after your death, that's not love. And if your motivation in giving to the poor is to seek recognition to the self, to have people, "Oh, how wonderful they are!" as Christ said about the Pharisees who threw their change into the pot, heard it rattling and heard it rattling around. And oh they received the praise of men. He says, "If your motivation isn't love, it is absolutely useless!" You can do all of the above with the wrong motive.

So here is what we need to be doing. Let's go to Matthew 22 and we're going to read verses 35 through 40. It's very simple. We are told in the New Testament about the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ. It is not complicated. You don't need a scholar to understand God's Word and the Bible. Matthew 22 verse 35:

Matthew 22:35. Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked *him a question*, [testing] him, saying, (KJV)

Verse 36 of Matthew 22:

Matthew 22:36. Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

"I know there's ten of them. You tell me which is the greatest."

Matthew 22:37. [Christ] said unto him, [You shall] love the Lord [your] God with all [your] heart, and with all [your life], with all [your] mind. 38) This is the first and great commandment. 39) And the second *is* like unto it, [You shall] love [your neighbor] as [yourself]. 40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (KJV)

All the Law and the Prophets! It is so simple! It's hard to do, but it is simple in concept.

So let's go back now. We left off in 1 Corinthians chapter 13—we left off in verse 3. Let's pick it up in verse 4, but I'm going to read it out of the Revised Standard Version. This tells us what we should be doing. This tells us how to prepare to be the Bride of Christ. 1 Corinthians 13 verse 4 out of the RSV, it's much better translated I believe.

1 Corinthians 13:4. Love is patient and kind; (RSV)

Are we patient and kind?

1 Corinthians 13:4b. love is not jealous or boastful; (RSV)

Do we boast about our accomplishments? Are we jealous of other people who get promoted or have a certain place?

Verse 5:

1 Corinthians 13:5. [Love] is not arrogant or rude. (RSV)

Meaning: putting people down, putting oneself over somebody else. Arrogant, strutting around like you're somebody. Love isn't that way.

1 Corinthians 13:5b. Love does not insist on its own way; (RSV)

In other words, love gives to the other person. "Well, let's do it your way. Let's try your way. Let's make it work your way."

1 Corinthians 13:5 continued: it is not irritable or resentful; (RSV)

We get irritable when we get tired, but if love is our motivation, we will temper that irritability. And we won't become resentful of what other people have or what other people do.

Verse 6:

1 Corinthians 13:6. it does not rejoice at wrong, (RSV)

When somebody slips and falls spiritually, I've seen in the past somebody rejoiced in that because "Well, I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't make that mistake," thereby elevating themselves.

1 Corinthians 13:6b. it [doesn't] rejoice [in] wrong, but rejoices in the right. (RSV)

Verse 7:

1 Corinthians 13:7. Love bears all things, [it] believes all things, [it] hopes all things, [it] endures all things. (RSV)

In other words, we're walking down that path. The five righteous virgins are walking down the path to meet Jesus Christ and if they are armed with love, they will be able to endure anything. They won't go aside. They won't get distracted. They will be able to endure all things.

Love must be the motivator of everything we do or we are going to be locked out. That's what the five foolish virgins lacked. They were obedient up to a point on a physical level, but they lacked the love that motivated their actions, motivated their words, motivated their deeds. And as a result, they were locked out.

Because there are people who are going to say, as we read in the New Testament Christ's words, "Hey, didn't we prophesy in Your name? Didn't we do this in Your name? Didn't we do that in Your name?" And Christ said, "You're the goats over here. I want you on my left side. I want these folks on My right side—the ones that have the love of God inside them."

So let's summarize. What we've seen so far is that all the virgins started on a journey together to meet the bridegroom. They're altogether walking down a path. That's true today. But the journey lasted longer than they thought. And so five of them, dubbed *wise*, planned for a long journey. And five dubbed *foolish* did not plan at all.

But somewhere along the journey they all fell asleep. All of us, we're human beings. We fall asleep. And all of us have been spiritually asleep one or more times in our Christian past. And then the five foolish, when they woke up, they found out they lacked something and they turned aside to try to get something they should have had in the beginning, but they got off the path. The five wise didn't because they had planned.

The five foolish thought that they could get by by going to the five wise and saying, "Give us of what you have." Well, if they lacked love, you just can't give them love. You know cut out a chunk of love and "Here, take some." That doesn't happen.

That comes from a personal relationship with God and Christ. It comes from study. It comes from prayer. It comes from fasting. It comes from meditating about: "How can I be more like Jesus Christ? What do I have to do?" And it involves urgently seeking the mind of Christ every day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Then you will be prepared. But the five foolish they didn't do that. They didn't do their homework. They didn't prepare. And then at the end of the day, they were found wanting or were found lacking.

And the five foolish found out the hard way, it doesn't make any difference where you sit. It doesn't make any difference in the sense you can tithe over here or you can tithe over there. The important thing is: Are we changing to be like Jesus Christ? Are we doing that?

Will Christ recognize us? Remember He said, "I don't know you." Would you marry somebody you don't know? I don't think so. Christ says to the five that are already in, "I recognize you. I know you. Why? Because we have the same spirit."

Now Neal in the prayer thanked God for the fact that we are like-minded Brethren meeting together. And like-minded Brethren recognize each other. Somebody who had a foreign spirit or a different spirit, we don't recognize that. We don't like that.

And Christ is saying, "I'm going to marry somebody like me, has the same likes, the same dislikes, the same loves, the same hates in that sense. I'm going to marry somebody who looks like me and I recognize." So He invited the five in because they had been preparing over time.

And the five foolish were locked out even though they were virgins. Even though they were virgins, they were locked out because they lacked the essential ingredient of being a Christian. And that is the love and the mind of God and Jesus Christ.

So in summary, here's what we need to be doing. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4 and verse 8. This is something that we have to yearn for and should keep us motivated to study and to pray and to fast and to meditate the way we should and to do good works. 2 Timothy 4 and verse 8, Paul is saying:

2 Timothy 4:8. Henceforth [from here forward] there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, (KJV)

"A crown of righteousness is laid up for me." He had that faith and confidence.

2 Timothy 4:8b. which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day [when He comes]: [but] not to me only, (KJV)

But notice who gets this crown of righteousness!

2 Timothy 4:8 continued. but unto all them also that [What?] love his appearing. (KJV)

That yearn for Christ's return! That yearn for change in our body from physical to spiritual! That yearn for Christ to come and restore all things and get rid of this stinking rotten evil world that we have to live in! And they love His appearing because then they're going to be part of His Family in a perfect world and they can help others arrive at that same place.

So we must love and yearn and want the return of Christ. And that motivates us, you see, to prepare for that day. The five foolish weren't even thinking about it. Somebody said, "Oh, the bridegroom is coming," and they kind of woke up out of their bleary sleep and then realized they didn't prepare.

Let's go to a final Scripture in Malachi chapter 3 verses 16 and 17. By taking action today, by planning today, we will be in this book that's described here. Malachi 3 reading verses 16 and 17:

Malachi 3:16: Then they that feared the [Eternal] (KJV)

When you fear God, you reverence God, you respect God by doing what He says.

Malachi 3:16: Then they that feared the [Eternal spoke] often one to another: (KJV)

And I believe God's people are doing that today, scattered as we are. People talk. People e-mail. People communicate. They speak often one to another.

Malachi 3:16b. and the LORD [listened to that conversation, those series of conversations going], and [He] heard *it*, (KJV)

Heard people showing love one to another, kindness one to another, gentleness one to another, patience one to another. He heard that, saw that.

Malachi 3:16 continued. and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the [Eternal], and that thought upon his name. (KJV)

How can I be more like my Savior Jesus Christ today than I was yesterday?

Verse 17:

Malachi 3:17. And [those that did that] they shall be mine, [says] the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels [My crown]; and I will spare them, as a man [spares] his own son that [serves] him. (KJV)

Those that are wise are spared the evil that is to come. And then are brought into the marriage supper and the door is closed, but they're on the inside not the outside.

Remember verse 13—in closing, remember verse 13 of Matthew 25. Christ said:

Matthew 25:13. Watch therefore, for [you] know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man [comes]. (KJV)

There are people who are going to say they know. And there are some people who are going to believe them. And we're told right here, "You better watch because you don't know!" And since we don't know, that means we better plan for a long journey, but we also should have an urgency right here, right now because our journey, as I said earlier, could end in a matter of hours or days or weeks. We just don't know. So we need to prepare now. And we need to follow *The Lessons of the Ten Virgins*.