

The Kingdom: Living Within: Part 15

When we first talked about the called and chosen, it created quite a stir, not just in our body but around this city. It made people very uncomfortable and even caused some to hate and persecute us. This dichotomy between the called and the chosen is a very difficult thing even for us to get our heads around since it grates against our emotions and everything within in us that has been conditioned by the delusion of “good” religion, which still runs so deep in our veins. When you strip away the delusion, however, the reality is that there are many people who call on the name of the Lord, are busy serving Him and doing such wonderful things for humanity; yet, they do not actually know Him. Despite their great deeds of service, their confessions and proclamations, their desire, deep intentions, and their unbending commitment to Him, He will say to them, “I never knew you, depart from me you who practice lawlessness” (**Matthew 7:23**).

The parable of the dragnet, in **Matthew 13:47-50**, which we studied during our last time together, addresses this very reality. The Kingdom operates such that all manner of fish are dragged into its net; but, when it is all said and done, the good fish are separated from the bad fish and the bad fish are thrown away into the furnace of fire—that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This was a hot-topic for the Lord. Jesus spoke of it often because He does not want us to be deceived or live in delusion any longer about these matters. This is why He has been so clear that the Kingdom of God does not belong to everyone who has prayed the sinner’s prayer nor to everyone who go to church and spends their lives “serving God;” rather, the Kingdom of God belongs very specifically to:

1. **Those who do the will of the Father**—those who now and continually **behold** the Son for who He is (the Lord God Almighty) and they now and continually **believe** by betting their lives on who He says He is. (**John 6:40**).
2. **Those who live by faith**, where all things—every part of their life—becomes an issue of betting it all on the Name of the Son of God, refusing to believe the lie. (**Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20-21**).
3. **Those who are poor in Spirit**—those who are identified in their abject neediness and therefore chose to now and continually live in a state of absolute vulnerability while they wait upon the Lord to do everything He has promised He would do. (**Matthew 5:3**).
4. **Those who are converted by God and choose, as a matter of lifestyle, to become like a little child**—those who live completely dependent upon their Father and look to Him to be their entire provision for all aspects of their life always refusing to take any matter into their own hands and refusing to make any decisions by their own wisdom and understanding. (**Matthew 18:1-6**).

This description dramatically narrows our understanding of the “good fish.” Honestly, this is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus freely gives His Kingdom, without cost, to those who: do the will of the Father; live by faith; are poor in spirit; and are converted by God and choose to become like a little child. Any gospel which does not stand on these truths is a perversion and a flat out distortion. This is what it means to believe on the Name of the only begotten Son of God. Keep in mind, the only work which God requires of us is to believe in Him whom He sent (**John 6:29**). Is this your gospel? Do you truly believe? The parable of the fishnet and the story we are going to study tonight begs each person to confront this question.

For example, just start with the first item: doing the will of the Father, which is to now and continually **behold** the Son for who He is (the Lord God Almighty) and now and continually **believe** by betting your life on who He says He is. How many people actually believe that Jesus is the Lord, as this name is presented in the Bible. Oh they may sing of it and intellectually acknowledge this as a theological concept; yet, how many people live in the reality that He is the Lord, in control of all things all the time, such that they know that every single thing that has ever happened in their life has been prescribed by God? I am frightened by the answer to this question. Most people's concept of good and evil, right and wrong, do not allow for this perspective. Yet, ***Psalm 37:23-24; 66:9;*** and **139** makes it clear that He has personally ordered, established or fixed each and every step of our lives. But if you practically look at the worry, anxiety, fear, and level of control people exert in trying to manage the details of their own life, it is clear they do not actually believe He is the Lord; they do not **behold** the Son and truly bet their lives on Him.

Sadly, we accept and make room for anyone who says they believe, are busy for the Lord, and have seemingly effective ministries. Yet, you have to ask, who do they really believe in? Their god may be named Jesus and may look a lot like our Jesus, but is it? Do they teach the same gospel? Is their Jesus truly the Lord God Almighty? Do they honestly believe that a life in Christ is about complete substitution, a total exchange of our lives for His because only God is good? Or do they love their own goodness and are always trying to prove it out? I am afraid we have been far from discerning and have not been willing to take the Lord at His Word; and people will be hurt by our delusion. That is why the Holy Spirit, through Paul, said:

Galatians 1:6-9

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

That word accursed is to be understood literally as damned to hell. The Lord is not fooling. It is His Kingdom and He has carefully set forth the requirements for admission; yet, in the modern age of Christendom these requirements have been largely missed, obfuscated, or downright ignored. We tend to treat all the fish that have been dragged in by the net as saved children of God. But that is simply not the case. What gospel to you preach? Tonight, we are going to study another parable that emphasizes this point and draws a very fine line between those who enter the Kingdom and those who don't. Again, this is a hot-topic for Jesus. He does not want you or me to miss this point. The Kingdom is not a free for all; yes, it drags in all manner of fish, but there will be a separation.

The parable we are going to study tonight is part and parcel of a dialogue Jesus was having with His disciples. They had come to Him privately saying: "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age" (***Matthew 24:3***)? He speaks to them of those who will attempt to deceive others and will come "in His Name," meaning they will claim to be a

Christian (some will claim to be Christ Himself) but they will preach a different gospel. He mentioned there will be wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes. But all these are just the beginning, the birth pangs. Then He mentioned the fact that they (those who believe they are doing God a great service—**John 16:2**) will deliver you to tribulation and kill you, for you will be hated because of His Name: because you believe Jesus is the Lord God Almighty, the Most High God, the Lord of Hosts, the great I Am.

Jesus continued to say that at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. Obviously, they cannot “fall away” from something to which they did not belong. So we are talking about the great apostasy where many will fall away from the faith. In fact, this falling away is a pre-requisite to the coming of the “Day of the Lord,” which is a phrase that defines the last days (**2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:1**). Accordingly, false prophets will arise and mislead many, and people’s love will grow cold. This world will become increasingly cruel and hateful. Yet, this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world, as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Clearly, the world of Christendom is going to schism and all the false rhetoric about what it means to believe and have faith will be destroyed in the face of such great tribulation and the threat of death. Thus, what will remain and preached will be the true Gospel of the Kingdom: the Kingdom of God is freely given, without cost, to those who do the will of the Father; live by faith; are poor in spirit; and are converted by God and choose to become like a little child.

Jesus then goes on to speak of the horrors of the great tribulation and the glory of His Second Coming. He warned people to learn how to discern the signs of the

times in order that they might recognize His return is near, that He is right at the door (this imagery of Him being “right at the door” is quite salient to tonight’s study). Accordingly, He admonished us to be on the alert and be ready for His return, for He is coming at an hour when you do not think. Jesus used two metaphors to make His point. First, He said that if the head of the household would have known when the thief was coming to rob him, he would have been ready and alert and would not have allowed the thief to break into his house. Second, he contrasts the faithful servants who are ready, alert, and doing the work the Master assigned them right up to the time of the Master’s return with the evil slave who does not expect his master to return and behaves horribly and does not take care of his responsibilities, etc. By the way, all of this is found in **Matthew 24:3-51**. With that as our backdrop (His coming and the end of days), Jesus then told this story.

Matthew 25:1-13

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, “Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the prudent answered, “No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.” And while they were going away to make

the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. Later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Like the parables of **Matthew 13**, this is another story about who belongs and who does not belong to the Kingdom. Just a little point of reference before we dive into the meat of things, Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven will be comparable to... He did not say it is comparable to but will be, utilizing the *future passive indicative*. This points forward and not backwards. Thus, we know this parable does not deal with His first coming and the Jews who missed it; rather, it addresses life in the Kingdom for not just the disciples but for you and me as well and our ability to look back on things and understand how life in the Kingdom actually works.

We must start by asking the question, why virgins and why ten? From **Revelation 14:4** and the Book of **Proverbs**, we can understand the use of virgins to be a Biblical metaphor describing those who have preserved themselves only for God. They have not indulged with other lovers, or other so called gods—who are just demons in disguise (**1 Corinthians 10:20**). Rather, they have made the choice to stay pure and wait for their true lover. So we are dealing with people who have dedicated their lives to God and live for Him and Him alone. So like the parable of the dragnet, this limits our understanding of this story to those within the realms of Christendom and to those who are seemingly hard-core in their faith.

Now as to the number of virgins, ten is the Biblical number of the divine order of human affairs, a completed time of testing, and the fulfillment of divine judgment.

For example, the Ten Commandments set forth the divine order of how humans are to live; they provide a complete testing of man's capability to be good; and they serve as the standard of divine judgment over mankind. So these ten virgins represent a divine order of human affairs, testing, and judgment. This is fitting given the context which preceded this story. After all, the Day of the Lord is all about the divine order of human affairs, testing, and judgment. Some fish are good and some are bad; some will be crated and the others will be tossed into the fire where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Why five and five? Why not some other split? We know that five is the Biblical number of grace. I believe this indicates that both the prudent and the foolish virgins were beneficiaries of the grace of God; which can be symbolized by the fact that they were all drawn in by the dragnet and each found the desire and the motivation to live as a virgin. Such desire and motivation only comes by way of the Spirit of God. I'll explain more of this in a moment.

Hence, this story is about the manner in which God tests and judges, after a designated time, all those who say they are His and claim to know Him. Why the lamps? The lamps, I believe, are symbolic for the spirit of man. **Proverbs 20:27**, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of his being." Accordingly, Jesus tell us in **Luke 12:35**, "Be dressed in readiness (let your loins be girded), and keep your lamps lit." This understanding also gives meaning to these associated verses: **Proverbs 13:9**, "The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked goes out." **Proverbs 24:20**, "For there will be no future for the evil man; the lamp of the wicked will be put out." **Proverbs 21:4**, "The lamp of the wicked, is sin." **Psalms 18:28**, "For You light my lamp; the Lord my God illumines my

darkness.” And finally of the wise woman it is said in **Proverbs 31:18**, “Her lamp does not go out at night.” So we have a story about the manner in which God tests and judges, after a designated time, the spirit of all those who say they are His and claim to know Him; and either their lamp is burning bright or it is snuffed out.

The setting of this story is a wedding and the virgins are waiting for the bridegroom to come and get them and take them into to the wedding feast. In this image, this parable paints the picture of Jesus being our bridegroom and coming for all those who are ready to enter with Him into the marriage supper of the Lamb, which is spoken of in **Revelation 19:7-9** where He says, “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” In fact, Jesus previously used this image of a wedding to speak of His return in **Matthew 22:2** and **Luke 12:36**; and of course there is that mysterious passage in **Ephesians 5:23-32** that likens the marriage of man and his wife to that of Christ and His church.

So consistent with the prelude to this story in **Matthew 24**, this story speaks of the readiness for His Second Coming of all those who claim they know Christ. We are told that five of the virgins were foolish whereas five of them were prudent. The prudent virgins not only had oil in their lamps, but they took along extra oil in flasks, just in case the bridegroom was delayed. Yet, when the foolish took their lamps, they took no extra oil with them; they only had what their lamps could hold.

I believe the oil represents the Holy Spirit, since the use of oil is a common biblical metaphor for the Spirit of God (**Luke 4:18; Act 10:38; Hebrews 1:9; Zechariah 4:6**). Clearly, this story makes the point that it does not matter if you are a virgin, if you are wholly devoted to God, if your life has been lived set apart for God and God alone, or even if you are waiting patiently for the Lord to return, if you do not have

the oil in your spirit, you will not enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. This truth is highlighted in a conversation Jesus had with a local scribe, a teacher of Israel. Let's quickly jump to that conversation to fully understand this point, and then we will get back to this marriage procession.

Mark 12:28-34

One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, **"You are not far from the kingdom of God."** After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

This man, this teacher of Israel, knew the truth better than most. He understood the commandments of God. Look at his great proclamation: He (referring to God)

is one (he fully recognized the Godhead), and there is no one else besides Him. He even knew that the Lord wanted him to love Him with all his heart, understanding, strength, and love, knowing that it would in turn lead to loving others. This man is a qualified virgin; yet, he does not qualify to enter into the marriage feast. Jesus says: “You are not far from the kingdom of God” which is a world’s difference from the Kingdom belongs to you. Thus, being a virgin is not enough and will never be enough to enter the Kingdom of God. Either you are in the Kingdom of God or you are not, regardless of your dedication and commitment to God. There are really no rewards for being near to the Kingdom, for outside of the Kingdom will be the place where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (*Isaiah 66:24*).

But you might be thinking that these foolish virgins did have oil in their lamps which makes them different than the scribe, so what gives? They had oil in their lamps because it takes a work of the Holy Spirit—a work of grace—for someone to become a virgin (hence, the number five). Just like it took a work of the Holy Spirit for that scribe to be “close” to the Kingdom of God. Remember, on our own, without the help and direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, we would never seek God. We are too dark, sick, selfish, and foolish to do such a thing. We arrogantly think we don’t need God believing we can make it on our own. *Psalms 14:1-3; Romans 3:10-18* and *Romans 8:5-8* make this abundantly clear: no one seeks God; all have turned aside; no one does good—there is not even one. But these foolish virgins were given a supply of the Spirit by the grace of God; they had oil in their lamps. But clearly we must have a continual supply of oil in order to have our lamps burning bright and clear when the bridegroom returns. This gives some weight and context to Jesus’ statement: “He who endures to the end will be saved” (*Matthew*

24:13). Thus, it is not enough to have had an encounter with God, to have prayed the “sinner’s prayer,” to be spiritual, to serve God, or to be faithful and diligent as a virgin, you must have the oil when He returns.

Let’s get back to the processional. Jewish weddings were normally celebrated at night, beginning just after sunset. Thus, when it says that the bridegroom delayed until midnight, this was a significant delay which explains why they all got drowsy and began to sleep (which I believe is a picture of the delusion that creeps into our lives and dulls our attention to the Lord’s coming). This drowsiness comes by way of lusts for satisfaction in this world, delusions of personal goodness, as well as the normal taking advantage of the grace which God has shown us in our lives, etc. For instance, we tend to become detached from the actual consequences and judgment associated with our sin, and the impact it has on others, because God is so merciful and compassionate towards us. In that we have become drowsy. This picture of those who become drowsy and sleep is described by a passage in **2nd Peter** which speaks of those who are impacted by the bridegrooms delay.

2 Peter 3:3-9

Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But by His word the present heavens and earth are

being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

It does seem as if the Lord is slow in keeping His promise. I am sure no one expected it to be over 2,000 years and counting; but here we are still waiting for His promise to return to come to fruition. By the way, this is why Jesus said that He will come on a day we don't expect Him. As a result of the delay, many get bored, many fall asleep, many lose interest, and many are sucked into the delusion of religion and their own personal goodness and are just not ready and prepared. They may be found in the churches of Christendom doing all manner of "godly" activities carrying on great and powerful ministries which impact so many, but they are not actually prepared for His return. They are like the scribe, that teacher of Israel, they are close to the Kingdom of God, but they are not part of the Kingdom.

Suddenly, in this story there was a shout: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." This can be correlated even now to our present time. Going back to **Matthew 24**, the signs are shouting loud of His return. Many have come in His name saying "I am the Christ." Many have been misled. There are wars and rumors of wars and nations are rising against one another and kingdom against kingdom. Consider the fact that in WWI and WWII approximately 100 million people died as a result of the war; yet, since that time it is estimated that more than 300 million have died in local wars and conflicts. There have been famines and earthquakes

and true believers are being persecuted all over the world; and no one is standing up for them. We know the apostate church has been born and people are falling away at an alarming rate. Our own country, which once claimed His name, has rejected His name and turned its back on God and on the people of God. The signs are shouting: “Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.” All the virgins hear the shout; in fact, those who don’t hear the shout of the signs of the times are probably not even qualified to be called a virgin—they are most likely just tares.

The virgins woke up from their malaise, and then they rose and trimmed their lamps. This means that they removed the burnt part of the wick so when the lamp is relit it can burn bright and clear. They probably cut away the old part of the wick and dipped the fresh part of the wick in oil or poured oil on the wick so it can burn brightly. Think about it; this is very similar to the way the true Beloved are trimmed and willingly have the burnt parts of their life cut off so the light of Jesus can shine brightly through them. This is another way of communicating the process by which God takes the Beloved and circumcises them away from this world and purifies them in order that He might shine brightly through them.

The foolish virgins however had no way to light their lamp since they burned out what they had brought and they had no extra oil. They wanted the prudent to give them some of their oil. But here is a spiritual reality. You cannot depend upon the oil of anyone else: not the oil of your parents, your siblings, your spouse, your pastor, or even your best friend. You must have oil in your lamp.

The foolish virgins were instructed to go to the dealers and buy some oil for themselves. Obviously, the dealers represent those who teach, those who instruct, those who can help them find oil—the merchants of religion. But while they were

gone to make the purchase, the bridegroom came and they missed His coming. Imagine; there are going to be so many people who scramble around to find what the true Beloved already have, but there will not be time. They will be too late. If you are not living prepared, if you are not living alert and ready, if you do not have an abundance of the Spirit in your life, then beware. You just might be one of the foolish virgins. But notice that they missed His return not because they did not maintain their virginity, were not dressed in the clothes of a virgin, were not waiting all night, but simply because they did not have the oil. They looked the part, just like the scribe, the teacher of Israel, but theirs was not the Kingdom of God.

The virgins with the oil had their lamps burning bright and they went in with the bridegroom to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. The implication of this story is that if the foolish virgins had not left but had stayed, and their lamps were not lit when the Bridegroom returned, they still would not have gained entrance. That is why they panicked and rushed to buy what they could and took the risk of missing the procession. It is a lot like the story we studied on September 15th and 29th 2013 in **Matthew 22:1-14** where a man was invited to a wedding feast of the King but did not have on appropriate wedding clothes. In that story, the King who was hosting the dinner for His Son, ordered that this man be bound hand and foot and thrown into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. That is where we get the infamous line: *“For many are called but few are chosen.”* Hence, the foolishness of these virgins was not lost on them; they knew they had to have oil. They scrambled around, but it was too late; the door was shut. This adds some intensity to Jesus claim in **Matthew 24:33** that when you see the “signs” you can be assured that He is near, at the door. You don’t want that door to shut leaving

you out.

Later the other virgins also came, saying, “Lord, lord, open up for us.” But the door was shut. But he answered, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” This is the second time Jesus used these harrowing words. The first time came in **Matthew 7** where he talked about the two trees: those that produce good fruit and those that don’t. Those that don’t, like the bad fish, like these foolish virgins, are cut down and thrown into the fire. That is when Jesus follows that story with the saying:

Matthew 7:21-23

Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.”

This passage should be getting quite familiar to us by now and it probably annoys you how often we use it. But we all have remnants of religion coursing through our veins and we need to wake up from our delusion. Jesus is serious; He is not joking. This is a matter of life or death. This passage is scary, sad, and tragic; but it is reality. He told those who cried “Lord, Lord” and boasted of great works in His name, “I never knew you.” This is practically the exact same phrasing He used with these foolish virgins. “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” And to make His point He

added, “Truly (or Amen) I say to you.” He does not want us to miss His emphasis for “I do not know you” is rendered in the *perfect active indicative*. In other words, He said (as in **Matthew 7:23**), “I never knew you and that is a statement of fact.”

Imagine. There are so many people who have been busy serving “god” and doing great things for the Kingdom, but do not have the oil. In reality, they serve a different god with a different gospel. They are virgins, they make great professions of faith, they wait for their “lord,” but they do not know the Lord God Almighty.

Therefore, be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. We may not know the day nor the hour, but we can hear the shout, we can see the signs. Personally, I am convinced He is near, right at the door. And unless you have oil in your lamp that door will be shut and He will declare to you, “Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” On that day, your virginity will mean nothing. This is reality, this is religious delusion stripped of its power. Do not let **Matthew 15:8-9** be spoken over your life: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.” It is time to proclaim the true gospel of Jesus Christ and stand in it and live it. Be one who does the will of the Father. **Behold** the Son and **Believe** in His name. Live by faith and bet your life on His Name; it is the only way to be pleasing to the Father. Be poor in Spirit. Know your abject neediness for all of Christ and live in a state of absolute vulnerability while you wait for Him to do all He has promised. And let the Lord covert you; and choose to become like a little child dependent upon Him for all things all the time, without exception. Then your entry into the Kingdom of God will be abundantly supplied to you.

Let's Pray