

The Parables of Jesus

- The Wise and the Foolish Virgins

-Matthew 25:1-13

Jesus is in the midst of a series of parables in which this is the fourth. Remember, in its context within this teaching setting with His disciples, this parable does concern the end times. However, Jesus is emphasizing being ready and prepared for His return and for the establishing of His Kingdom here on earth.

To review a little we see in Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:3 and Luke 21:7, that while on the Mount of Olives, Jesus was asked by His disciples, "...when shall these things be and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" In Matthew 24:4-28; Mark 13:4-27 and Luke 21:6-28, Jesus went into a dissertation of the "signs of those times." He does this through parables in which this one is the fourth of six of Jesus' last parable to His disciples.

The first three in this teaching setting were: "The Parable of the Fig Tree" - Matthew 24:32-35; Mark 13:28-29; Luke 21:29-31; "The Second Use of the Parable of the Watchful Servants" - Mark 13:35-37 and "The Second Use of the Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servants" - Matthew 24:45-51. If we notice, all of these last parables that Jesus brought forth to His disciples had to do with the future. This parable on the "Wise and Foolish Virgins, as well as the last two remaining parables are dealing with the same aspect – the last days and the end times.

"The Wise and Foolish Virgins" - Matthew 25:1-13: "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 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. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

The traditional Christian view concerning this parable is that the "virgins" represent the people of the church and the "oil" represents the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We are taught that if you do not have the "oil," the Holy Spirit, you will miss out on the return of our Bridegroom Jesus. The regenerative power of the Holy Spirit is vital to be a born again child of God. However, there is much dissention within the Body of Christ as to what that exactly means. It means different things to different denominations and therefore it brings a confused understanding of this parable based on which "denominational camp" you are in.

I am not necessarily going to dispute that "traditional Christian view." However, I do not believe that Jesus would want His disciples as well as us, today, to be confused over such a vital issue expressed in this parable being it is one of His last parables just prior to His death, burial and resurrection.

I believe that we must take these parables in the context in which they were given and within the understanding of the listeners, the twelve **Jewish** disciples that Jesus was speaking to. I believe Jesus was referring to something else as He presented this parable to His disciples as well as to us in this day. Therefore, I would like to present a "non-traditional view" of this parable for us to possibly think about.

In the Jewish Scriptures, God gives the Jewish people a command concerning the observing of the "Feasts of the Lord." These are found in Leviticus 23. (The reader is encouraged to study more on these "Feasts of the Lord" as found in Leviticus 23. "The Feasts of the Lord Study Guide" from Simply Simple Worship is also available.) Without going into all of the "Feasts of the Lord" found in Leviticus 23, for our discussion of this parable, we need to look at two of these "Feasts of the Lord" - "Rosh HaShanah" and "Yom Kippur."

We will take a brief look at Rosh HaShanah first. Rosh HaShanah is referred to in the Bible as "Yom Teruah", the "Day of the Sounding of the Shofar" or the "Day of the Awakening Blast." On Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah, the "Day of the Sounding of the Shofar," it is imperative for every person **to not miss** "hearing" this "blast."

The Hebrew word "teruah," means "an awakening blast" which could either be a blast from a shofar or trumpet, as well as a very loud "supernatural shout." This "sounding of the shofar" or the "awakening blast," is a "call" to His people to awaken from their "spiritual sleep," to **repent**, turn towards God and be ready to meet with Him.

In Judaism, there are three trumpet (*shofarim*) "blasts" that have a name - The "first trump" which is blown on the Feast of Pentecost, the "last trump blown" which is the last trumpet sound at the conclusion of Rosh HaShanah, and the "great trump" which is blown on Yom Kippur. It is the "last trump blown" on Rosh Hashanah that Paul was referring to in 1Corinthians 15:52 where he states, *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."* Paul was telling us to be alert, to be awake and to pay attention to what is about to take place as we "hear" this last trump that will be blown at "that time."

It is the "sounding of the shofar" or "awakening blast" that is to be a "warning alarm" to all who "hear it." God's heart is to awaken and warn people before He proclaims judgment. God warned the people before the flood in Noah's day. God does not desire anyone to receive the wrath of judgment. He desires none to perish. In 2Peter 3:9 it tells us, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."*

In Isaiah 51:9, the awakening sound of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is associated with the coming of the Messiah - Jesus. It refers to the crowning of a King. In Jewish tradition, this is the day that the true king of the Israelites was to be crowned. Throughout the history of the Jewish people we know and see that the crowning of kings did not always take place on Rosh HaShanah. That is because those kings crowned at any other time were not established and anointed by God.

It is believed that King David was crowned on this day, Rosh HaShanah, and entered Jerusalem. As the "Son of David," Jesus, as He entered Jerusalem on that first "Palm Sunday," pointed to that "Day" when He will return for all to see, as He will be crowned King over all the earth and usher in the Messianic age, the Millennial rule and reign. In Jewish tradition, this "sounding of the shofar" on Rosh HaShanah will also be a "sound" declaring that the "gates of Heaven are opened" for those who were ready and prepared to hear the "sounding of the shofar" and enter into the "chambers of the King."

Rosh HaShanah, as well as the next feast to be observed, Yom Kippur, are connected by a time span of **10 days**. These 10 days have become known as the "**Days of Awe**" as well as the season of "Teshuvah." Note - Jewish tradition has changed this time period to begin 30 days prior to Rosh HaShanah which now makes this time period of "Teshuvah/Repentance," 40 days. However, as given in Torah, God had established it originally to be just 10 days.

The Hebrew word "teshuvah" means "to return, to turn from or to repent." It is a time period of **great reflection and repentance**. Every morning during this time period, the trumpet (*shofar*) or ram's horn is blown to warn the people to repent and return to God. It is a "call" to examine and prepare their lives and purge themselves of their sins so that they will not experience the "judgment and wrath" of a Holy God.

The 10 days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, as we said, are called the "Days of Awe." This is to be a somber, serious time for one to look inwardly and examine one's own self. It is a time of self-examination to consider one's sins of the previous year and then truly repent before Yom Kippur.

On Rosh HaShanah you will also see the Jewish people doing a ritual called, "Tashlich." "Tashlich" means "casting off" and involves symbolically casting off the sins of the previous year by tossing pieces of bread into a body of flowing water. As the water carries away the bits of bread so too are sins symbolically carried away. In this way the person hopes to start the New Year with a clean slate. This tradition began in the 2nd century AD and is inspired from Micah 7:19 - *"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."*

In Jewish Tradition, on Rosh HaShanah, God has "books" that he writes their names in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the coming year. However, according to Jewish tradition, a person's actions during the "Days of Awe" can alter "God's decree" or we can say their fate for the coming year. **The actions that change their fate are acts of true repentance** (hence doing the ritual of "Tashlich"), prayer, and good deeds (usually, charity) known as "mitzvahs."

These "books" are then "sealed" on Yom Kippur. This concept of God "writing names in books" is the source of the common greeting during this time by the Jewish people, "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year." (**Sound familiar?? - Revelation 20:12, 15 and 21:27- names written in the Lamb's "Book of Life")

Rosh Hashanah is the first of the "Autumn Feasts of the Lord." It points to a time that is yet to come and to be fulfilled by Messiah. The "Spring Feasts" of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and Pentecost were fulfilled through Jesus at His first coming 2000 years ago. God is "sounding the alarm" to His people, and to the entire world to "awake" from our slumber and prepare ourselves. We are about to hear the "awakening blast" - the Gates of Heaven will be opened; the King, our Bridegroom will come and take His people, His Bride.

Now, let's take a brief look at Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the culmination of the "Ten Days of Awe," hence the term used, "Day of Judgment." It is the day that the "gates of heaven are now shut." In Jewish tradition, Yom Kippur is the most solemn day of the year. It is a day of fasting and doing nothing but praying and turning towards God.

Yom Kippur is when the next shofar blast is to be sounded. In Jewish tradition, this shofar blast is called, "The Great Trump." It is a blast that declares "Final Judgment." This is the day when the "gates of Heaven" are closed and judgment has been sealed.

Paul refers to this in 1Thessalonians 4:16-17, *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven **with a shout**, with the voice of the archangel, and with **the trump of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

Jesus referred to this time of "Yom Kippur" as well in Matthew 24:31, *"And he shall send his angels with **a great sound of a trumpet**, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*

Yom Kippur is referred to as the Day of "Face to Face." This was the only day that the High Priest would be able to meet with God "face to face." This refers to us, today as Christians. Jesus tore open the veil of separation for that "Day" when we shall behold Him, "face to face."

This is what, I believe, Jesus was referring to in Matthew 25:1-13 in the "Parable of the Ten Virgins" I believe Jesus was referring to this time period between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur in this parable. His disciples would have understood this, being Jewish.

In the parable we can see the distinct references to the end times and the Feast of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. Jesus speaks of "ten virgins." Jesus was referring to the "Ten days of Awe." Remember, it is during these "Ten Days of Awe" that the people are to "**prepare themselves and be ready.**" This is done through a **true heart of repentance** and a lifestyle that reflects the character of God.

In Matthew 25:5, we see that all of the virgins were slumbering while awaiting the Bridegroom but yet five of them were "prepared" and "ready" with "oil" within their lamps and their lamps were lit. This meant that even though they were slumbering they were in the "watching" mode. This goes right along with the previous parables.

This is symbolic of the "oil of the Holy Spirit" which represents the Holy Spirit's work in the regenerative work of salvation. The ones with the "oil" had a **true heart of repentance** and their lifestyle reflected the character of God. Unfortunately, they were asleep which represents a "slumbering" church today. It is time for the "slumbering church to awaken." God is giving us an "awakening blast" in many ways in these days so that we awaken from our slumber.

Five of them had oil; however, the oil ran out. What could this mean? Could it mean that it refers to those, as in the Parable of the Sower, who received the Word at first with gladness but it never did take full root. They were not prepared and ready to meet with their God.

Even though they were with those that were ready, their heart was **not** one of true repentance and their lifestyle was **not** reflecting the character of God. In other words, they were deceived into thinking that they were ready to meet their God simply because they were with those who were ready.

They were waiting for the Bridegroom but yet they were not really ready for Him with the "oil" of the redemptive, regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. They had on the wrong "wedding garment," as we discussed in the "Parable of the Wedding Feast" and the improperly dressed guest. They had no redemptive "oil." It meant that they were not truly born again.

We see that in Matthew 25:6, a "cry was made." This refers to the "awaken blast" (either a shofar or a loud shout) that would be blown on Rosh HaShanah (the "last trump"). It was declaring that the "Gates of Heaven" were opened and the "Bridegroom" was coming for His people.

Matthew 25:7-9 tells us, as we previously discussed, that five were ready and five were not. The five that were not ready were frantic, realizing their state of spiritual recklessness. However, it was too late. The five virgins that had "oil" could do nothing for those that had no oil.

This is a very important aspect of this parable. Each person is ultimately responsible for his or her own heart. We cannot "piggyback" ourselves into the Kingdom on anyone else's salvation - not our spouses, not our parents, not our pastors or leaders, not our friends, etc.

Matthew 25:10 tells us that the Bridegroom came and those who were "ready and prepared" went in with Him to the "marriage" and the "door was shut." This refers to Yom Kippur when in Jewish tradition; the "Gates of Heaven" are closed.

This parable was one of the three last parables, which Jesus gave to His closest ones on this earth - His disciples, just before His "passion on the cross." It was His final attempt to make sure that the His disciples understood what was going to take place in the "end times," just as they had asked Him. He used language and references that they would understand by using the "feast days" of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, as well as the "Ten Days of Awe."

The message is clear to His followers, His disciples in this hour. Will we be as the five virgins were, ready with "their oil" or will we be as the five foolish virgins who were just looking the part but were not truly ready for His return? That is the question for all those who "call" themselves His disciples in this hour or in the hour of His return. His "return" meaning whether it is at the time of His coming the second time on the Mount of Olives to take His place on the Temple Mount or whenever He comes for you or I when we may be breathing our last breath.

Will you and I be truly ready? Hmmm...