



river west church

The Parable of the Ten Maidens

Matthew 25:1-13

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The Parable of the Ten Maidens (also known as the Parable of the Ten Virgins) is one of the more unfamiliar passages in the New Testament. This is partly owing to the fact that it is only recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, but also because...well it's a bit strange, and can tend to make people feel pretty uncomfortable. This is unfortunate, for as we will find, the parable carries a powerful message for believers and non-believers alike in the church. We have learned in our study that Jesus taught in parables for the purpose of testing the hearts of His hearers and calling them to respond and change. Today's passage serves to accomplish this purpose by focusing on the return of Jesus to claim His bride, the church, and to take her to be with Him for eternity.

Jesus the Bridegroom

The imagery of Jesus as a Bridegroom and the church as His Bride appears frequently throughout the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 9:14-15; Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:6-9). The Parable of the Maidens tells the story of a bridegroom who is delayed in arriving at his marriage feast. It's a picture of the second coming of Jesus Christ and the future glory and celebration that is in store for those who are in Christ. Jesus picked this imagery because He wanted His hearers to know that His return was certain, even if it was delayed longer than they expected. The return of Christ to claim His Bride is a central theme of the Gospel message. The Christian life involves not only looking forward to Jesus' return but actually living day by day in a manner that reflects this reality. Since we cannot know the day or the hour of His return, we are encouraged to live our lives in a state of constant "readiness".

Foolish and Wise Preparation

A central theme of the Parable of the Maidens involves a contrast between wisdom and foolishness. From the very start, Jesus reveals that five of the maidens are foolish because they do not prepare to meet the bridegroom. They have lamps, but no oil. They have form, but no power. They appear to be included with those who are longing to meet the bridegroom, but when he arrives, they are found to be without true light. The warning could not be more stark. It is foolish and dangerous to assume that you will be able to make a last minute preparation of your heart at the time that Christ returns. On the other hand, it is extremely wise to heed the truth of this parable and many other passages of scripture which prepare us for the certain return of Christ. The wise person, like the five wise maidens, is prepared. To live wisely between the first and second coming is to pay attention to the condition of your heart with Christ. It is to be spiritually awake; alive to Christ. It is to live your life in a manner which exhibits that you are truly ready. My prayer is that the LORD will stir our hearts today and cause us to long for the return of Christ our LORD!