

Parable of the Ten Virgins Unveiled

The Tragedy and Glory of the End Times Church

by
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At some point in the near future the entire born-again church is going to get a wake up call. This event will be universal and undeniable, and it will happen before the resurrection of the saints on the last day.

Two dramatic changes will take place in the course of events after this wake up call. The “foolish” virgins will become apostate (revolt from the faith), and the “wise” virgins, in the midst of great persecution and tribulation, will experience an amazing revival for the great end times harvest of souls.

The haunting, deep, and, at the same time, thrilling prophetic parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) given by Jesus as a response to the question asked by the disciples in Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:3,4, and Luke 21: 7 has been problematical for Bible scholars, especially those of a dispensational persuasion, and, as a result, it is usually given a spiritualized general application related to maintaining our readiness for the return of Christ at any time.

However, we must remember that this parable was given with numerous specific details as part of the Lord’s lengthy answer to the disciples’ question, ***When will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?***

As recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, the Lord first gave His disciples (Peter, James, Andrew, and John) an outline of the major end times events, the prophetic future of these specific men, and the prophetic events that would be experienced by His future disciples in the end times right up to, and including, the last day.

Following His straightforward prophetic outline in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, the Lord gave them two analogies and two parables to illustrate details and aspects of His prophetic answer to their original question.

All of the analogies and the parables shed light on the details of His prophetic response, but the parable of the ten virgins is the least understood and contains the most important details.

The parable of the ten virgins, like all parables, is a spiritual linguistic device that cannot be fully understood using the intellect alone. The amazing amount of detail, though, tells us that this parable was intended to reveal a great deal more than just a general application related to maintaining of our readiness for His return.

In order to clearly understand the literal meaning of the text we need to first establish the time frame in which this event takes place. After that we need to establish the identity of the bridegroom, the bride, the groomsman, the lamps and oil, and the virgins.

The time frame of the parable is at midnight immediately prior to the wedding banquet of the Lord, and, because the parable was given in response to the disciples’ question, ***When will this happen and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?***, the parable must be concerned with the return of the Lord.

The succinct overview includes:

- 1) an initial expectation of the bridegroom's arrival by the early church (*Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom..*);
- 2) a long, unexpected wait – i.e. 1900+ years (...*Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.*);
- 3) a time shortly before the resurrection (...*But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'*);
- 4) the time of the resurrection itself (...*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.*) and:
- 5) a time after the resurrection (...*Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.'*¹² *But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'*)

The bridegroom is obviously the Lord. He is identified in various passages as the bridegroom, and He identifies Himself as the “bridegroom”:

How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast. Matthew 9:15 NIV (emphasis is the author's)

The parable does not specifically identify the source of the announcement, **'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'** We do know that it is not the “virgins” themselves, because they have all fallen asleep. We may assume that this announcement is made or caused anonymously by the Holy Spirit, the “groomsman”, but there is no direct scriptural evidence. Nor do we know what the nature of the announcement will be, but we can assume that it will be remarkable, universal, and recognizable in scripture to the entire believing church.

The identification of the “virgins” is more problematical. Inductively, we must conclude that the parable, given to the church, is about the church. But questions arise.

“Virgins” (*parthenos* Strong's #3933) is a term used to denote an unmarried person of either sex, and in relation to a group waiting to accompany the bridegroom into the wedding feast, it would indicate the unmarried kinsmen of the bridegroom.

The KJV uses a more literal translation, when it identifies the virgins as “children (sons) of the bridechamber”, a term that would apply to the bridegroom's close relatives, **including adopted brothers and sisters.**

This interpretation is strengthened by the Lord's literal identification of His disciples as “guests” of the bridegroom (Himself).

And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. Matthew 9:15 ESV (emphasis is the author's)

This specific scriptural identification of the disciples (and, therefore, the church) as “guests” (unmarried kinsmen of the groom) is coupled with the Lord’s specific scriptural identification of Himself as the “bridegroom”.

Yet, church tradition, fueled primarily by the heavy influence of dispensational theologians, identifies the church as the literal, specific, and unique “bride” of Christ, not the unmarried kinsmen or the “sons of the bridechamber.”

It is not appropriate to use mixed metaphors in a parable, and this apparent contradiction is a HUGE interpretational blockage for many in the church today. We are very fond of calling ourselves the “bride of Christ”, and the terminology, though never used as a specific scriptural reference related to the identity of the New Testament church, has been used and repeated in the post-apostle church, and is a particularly popular metaphor with those of a dispensational persuasion.

We imagine ourselves as the lovely “bride” (of lukewarm Laodiceans whom He threatens to spew out of His mouth) being carried away in glory by our bridegroom to the wedding supper of the Lamb while the unbelieving world below gets ready to catch hell for seven years.

(Do we also imagine the Old Testament saints, from Adam through John the Baptist, standing on the sidelines in the wedding crowd cheering the lovely Laodicean bride while they patiently wait their turn sometime later?)

And if we are the “bride”, then who are the unmarried kinsmen of the groom? It’s not Israel. Israel is repeatedly identified throughout scripture as the covenant “wife” of God.

Again, go back to the original question asked by Peter, James, Andrew, and John, the future mega-apostles of the church.

“When will these things happen, and what will be the signs of your coming?”

This parable given to the future apostles of the church, by context, must be about the church, and the church must be the “virgins” (unmarried kinsmen of the Groom) in this parable.

This logical conclusion should be overwhelmingly apparent to anyone who reads the passage, but our ability to reach this logical conclusion has been hindered by our assumption of false dispensational teaching concerning the identity of the bride.

Our assumption that the church is the literal, specific, unique “bride of Christ” blinds our ability to “see” the truth. Therefore, this false, oft repeated interpretation of scripture must be put completely to rest so that we will “see”, “believe”, and respond to what the Lord is revealing to us about the future of the church in this parable.

This issue is covered in detail in **“The Bride of Christ,”** but succinctly the “bride” is the New Jerusalem and all of the inhabitants thereof (i.e. everyone whose name is written in the Lamb’s book of life. The New Testament church is not the exclusive bride of Christ as it was taught by dispensational theologians and adopted by the modern church.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2 NASB

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. Revelation 21:9,10 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

The church will inhabit the new Jerusalem along with old testament saints, tribulation saints, and millennium saints. It is not erroneous, therefore, in a metaphorical sense, to identify the church with the “bride” of Christ. But it is erroneous to identify the church as the literal, specific, and unique “bride”, and most who use this terminology, adopted from dispensational theologians, are using it in a manner that excludes old testament saints, tribulation saints, and millennium saints from the definition.

No matter how useful the metaphor of identifying the church as the exclusive “bride” of Christ might be, it hinders us from understanding the prophetic message of this parable, and...it is not scripturally accurate. Are we going to thus add to the word of God by calling ourselves the “bride” when scripture (and the Lord) clearly identifies the New Jerusalem (and all its inhabitants) as the “bride”?

The temptation for pastors and teachers will be to continue to use the term, because it has been popularized in the modern church. Yielding to this temptation is, like the yielding to any other temptation, sin (and typical of the Laodicean church that blends truth with error).

We can continue to spiritualize the parable and say that we ought always to keep our lamps trimmed and be ready for the return of Christ, but we need to remember that this parable is a specific prophetic response by Jesus to the disciples’ question about His return and that it describes a specific and detailed series of events that will take place before the marriage supper of the Lamb, events we are being warned about so that we can make an appropriate response.

This is also a prima facie demonstration of just how powerful assumptive knowledge (based on some original presumption) and scripturally incorrect traditions are in hindering the work of the Spirit of truth in our correct interpretation of scripture.

The oil is generally accepted to be the Holy Spirit and needs no exegetical expansion, and the lamps represent our souls or our unique spirit-soul connection whereby we receive revelatory input (“light”), which is His word (His truth, promises, and commands) from the Holy Spirit in various ways.

A lamp with oil but without a neatly trimmed wick provides some light, but not the full light of a lamp with oil and a trimmed wick.

The “trimming” of the wick is the cutting away of false doctrine, false practices, and false interpretations of scripture that have divided the body of Christ and hindered the manifestation of the fullness and glory of Christ through the church.

A lamp without oil is like trying to read scripture in the dark and is reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 2:14.

As we review the parable itself, keep in mind that this parable reveals what will happen to two distinct classes of virgins, or unmarried kinsmen of the bridegroom. It does not relate to individual history. Individual history is relative only to whichever classification the believer falls into.

Nor is the designation “foolish” virgin a description of the nominal (not born again) church. If you are a “virgin” (an unmarried kinsman of the Lord) you are born again. Being “foolish” or “wise” is an adjective describing two categories of “virgins” (unmarried kinsmen of the Lord) both of whom have the oil of the Holy Spirit at the time they are awakened.

‘Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ... (All ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom, which we must assume is the expectation that the entire church has had from the beginning, not just the present day. But we must also assume that the seeds of “foolishness”

were already planted. Keep in mind, too, that this parable is about believing, born-again Christians and has nothing to do with nominal Christianity.)

Note: Ten is the number of divine perfection as in the ten commandments. The number ten represents the whole church. Therefore, all ten are born-again Christians. This is, repeat, not a parable about five “nominal” Christians and five “born-again” Christians.

Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. ... (The designation of “foolish” and “prudent” or “wise” applied to the entire believing church from the initial going out to meet Him, which includes the expectancy of His original disciples and the earliest days of church history.)

For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ... (This is the real point of division. At some point, early in church history, the entire believing church began to divide into these two classes. Here the indication is that they have oil in their lamps, but they did not take extra oil or make provision to keep oil in their lamps.)

but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. ... (The “prudent” or “wise” made sure that they would continue to have oil in their lamps by taking extra flasks of oil. This activity includes a diligent, continual pursuit of pure doctrine and active, obedient faith responses to the truth, promises, and commands of the Lord. This is the specific difference between the designation of “foolish” or “wise” virgins.)

Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. ... (The “delay” represents roughly 1800 years of church history, and we should note that the entire born again believing church became drowsy and fell asleep. Sleep, in this case, does not indicate death, but a lack of alert, vigilant faith.)

But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' ... (“Midnight” refers to a time immediately before the arrival of the bridegroom. It also prophetically refers to a time immediately before ***the last day***, which is also the day we are resurrected, and ***the day of the Lord***, the day of His return to Mount Olivet. The prophetic time frame for “immediately” could be a number of years, though, and it may apply to the entire “generation” of those who “see” the “beginning of birth pains” signs of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21).

Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ... (“All”, again, means the entire born again church. It is impossible for those who have not been “born again” to “trim” their lamps. Therefore, at the time of the midnight announcement, all of the virgins begin to trim their lamps, and all of the “virgins” are born again believers. Trimming the lamps is a response of preparation and specific repentance relative to the Lord’s instructions to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3.)

The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ... (The KJV says “are gone out” which suggests an entirely different meaning, but the verb transliterated as *sbinnymi* (Strong’s #4570) is in the passive voice, thus indicating “are being quenched” or “are going out.”) All translations of the Bible other than the KJV recognize

the passive voice in their translations. Note that the foolish, who had long ago failed to prepare to keep oil in their lamps, are now looking to the “wise” to provide oil for them, and we should note that the foolish are aware of their predicament. They know that their lamps are going out, and that they will soon be depleted. This is a time of great conflict between the wise and the foolish virgins. This is also the beginning of the great apostasy or falling away from the faith during the tribulation.)

⁹But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' ... (This is not an act of selfishness on the part of the wise. The “oil” is available only from God. The instruction by the wise saints is also an instruction for the foolish virgins to get their doctrine and obedience straight (as instructed by the Lord in Revelation 2 and 3), which is a difficult message to take for the foolish virgins who have invested lives, ministries, and personal reputations in false doctrines and erroneous, “foolish” practices and presumptuous interpretations of scripture. Their confusion and inability to appropriately respond to the tribulation, persecution, and martyrdom of the saints ultimately leads them to deny and reject the faith. This “falling away” is also accompanied by the false signs and wonders of the false prophets of the Whore of Babylon.)

¹⁰And 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. ... (This is the point of real separation between the foolish and the wise as the foolish fall into apostasy, and it is after this real separation that the Bridegroom arrives.)

¹¹Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' ... (“Later” does not indicate a specific time frame, but it does indicate that the wise virgins have already gone into the father’s house with the bridegroom. Therefore, we must assume that this is a time after the resurrection of both the dead and the living saints. This event, therefore, represents the foolish virgins response to the Lord at the white throne judgment after the millennium.)

¹²But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' ... (This is a response to a class of men, the foolish virgins, who were “away”, having become apostate before the time of the bridegroom’s arrival. Note that He did not say, “I never knew you.” He said, “I do not know you.” He did, in fact, “know” them at one time, but He does not “know” them now.)

¹³Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. ... (This is the Lord’s warning to the entire believing church from its beginning until the resurrection of the saints, and the key phrase is, “be on the alert.”)

The key to understanding the difference between “wise” and “foolish” virgins, is whether or not they have made provision, or planned and determined, to keep the oil of the Holy Spirit in their lamps (souls). An elaboration concerning what this might or might not entail would be exhaustive, but our assumption concerning what kinds of things could lead to the “foolish” classification would include the following:

1. Failure to keep and maintain the pure doctrine of the original apostles;
2. Allowing the introduction of false teaching, false doctrine and, even, the doctrines of demons, into accepted church practice;
3. Substitution of religious acts and works for genuine acts and works of faith;

4. A reliance on priests, prophets, and pastor-teachers to tell us what to believe instead of teaching believers how to receive and confirm truth for themselves;
5. The acceptance of division, controversy, and religious in-fighting as being “normal” for the church, and;
6. Both the failure to rely on and promote the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, and the corruption and perversion of doctrines and practices related to the Holy Spirit.

It was obviously the Lord’s intent that Paul and other early church leaders and members maintain their alertness in the Spirit in the expectation of the Lord’s imminent return, and His intent has never changed in two thousand years.

That this alertness in the Spirit gradually waned for the reasons stated above as well as reasons not specifically mentioned, is historic fact, and the Lord prophesied to His disciples that this gradual loss of alertness in the Spirit would take place. (His foreknowledge that it would take place does not mean that it was His will.)

The parable was reported by Matthew as it was repeated to him by the disciples who were present, but it is unlikely that the Lord allowed him or the disciples who heard Him speak the parable to have Holy Spirit insight other than the general, but extremely important, command to maintain alertness

The term and description, “asleep”, used to describe the church at the time of the announcement is important, and we should note that the entire church is asleep at the time of the announcement. This term obviously does not refer to the entire church being dead in Christ at the time of the announcement, but the intuitive picture is one of the entire church not being spiritually alert, which is relative to the Lord’s final warning in this parable.

Many who are reading this commentary are assuming that they are wide awake, and some are. But, as a general rule, the entire body of Christ will not be fully awake until we hear the announcement. Therefore, the entire church “hears” the announcement and wakes up, but, as we trim the wicks of our lamps and prepare to meet the bridegroom it somehow becomes apparent to the foolish virgins that they are running out of oil for their lamps.

Nominal believers are not included in this parable, and the parable has nothing to do with the division between the true church and the nominal church. It has to do with apostasy in the true church because of “foolishness”.

The concept of apostasy is extremely difficult for the church to deal with, especially those, like the author, who were trained to believe the doctrine of the eternal, unconditional security of the believer, or “once saved, always saved.”

The reality of apostasy will be shockingly demonstrated during end times tribulation, but it is prudent (“wise”) to be aware of the reality and the cause of apostasy before we enter into that time.

It took me several years of intense study and prayerful meditation on scripture before I was fully convinced in my heart and soul that apostasy is possible, and I do not expect or want any other Berean who has adopted the doctrine of “once saved, always saved” from his/her denomination to be easily persuaded. But I will produce the evidence for “wise” virgins to examine because of the importance, not only of the doctrine itself, but the believer’s ability to receive and respond to the truth of end time prophecy.

The comfortable explanation, and the one some readers will be tempted to believe, is that the parable is dealing with religious traditions and denominations, not individual believers. However, the context of the parable indicates that these are individual “virgins.”

The approach for Bereans who want to know the truth is to thoroughly re-examine the issue even if a re-examination results in the confirmation of what we have already believed. And the process of a thorough re-examination of the issue begins with the determination of what the text in context is literally saying. Then, when the text in context is understood, allowing the Spirit of Truth to confirm it in the believer's heart and mind. That process, though, will not likely be completed through the reading of this commentary. What is presented here will only start the Berean believer on a journey to discover Truth (deliberate capital "T").

The roots of the word, "apostasy" (*apostasia* – Strong's #646) are "*apo*" (away, apart) and "*stasis*" (standing). It means a falling away, revolt, or defection from a previous standing, and, in biblical usage it means to leave one's right standing with God through the rejection of one's faith. Clearly, a nominal Christian, who converts from Catholicism to Protestantism or who loses interest in the Christian belief system is not "apostate", although those who hold to the doctrine of the eternal, unconditional security of the believer ("once saved, always saved") will assume that this is a reference to nominal Christians who once adopted the Christian belief system but were never born-again.

However, you cannot "revolt" from something you were never a part of. You cannot "leave" something in which you never had a genuine "standing".

Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day... (the day of the Lord) ... will not come, unless the rebellion ... (apostasy or falling away from the faith)... comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 NASB (inserts are the author's)

The apostasy is so shocking as an event that Paul gives it equal billing with the revealing of the Antichrist, which is the pivotal event of the entire tribulation.

In our day (of the Laodicean and Sardis churches) it is common for congregations to be filled with numerous "nominal" believers, those who profess to be "Christian" but have not been born again. We may assume, then, that the congregations of Paul's day were similar, but we would be wrong.

In Paul's day to claim the faith and then abandon it was unthinkable, and, because of the sensitivity to the Holy Spirit of apostles, prophets, pastors, and elders in the church of that day, it is unlikely that a believer who was not born-again could think he/she was a "Christian" for any length of time in their presence, which is Spirit-grieving evidence of how far away the modern western church is from what God has intended.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons... 1 Timothy 4:1 NASB

The word for "faith" used in this passage is transliterated from the Greek as *pistis* (Strong's #4105)

This is the same word used in 2 Corinthians 13:5: ***Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?*** (emphasis is the author's)

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 being "in the faith" means that Christ is in you, and you have been born again through the baptism of the Spirit. Those who "fall away" or "revolt" from the faith in later times are falling away from being born again.

A revolt, defection, or falling away from Christianity in this sense means the rejection of faith by those who once had faith (in Christ), and, secondarily, but importantly, the adoption of a contrary, opposing faith.

It does not, however, mean that those whose doctrinal beliefs are erroneous, are “apostate”. Apostasy is the very serious rejection of faith in Christ by those individuals who were once regenerated by their saving faith in Christ.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away... (become apostate)..., it is impossible to renew them again to repentance... (unto salvation)..., since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. Hebrews 6:4-8 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

Important: From God's covenant point of view and His promises, the born again believer will not be rejected by God, even for gross moral sins too horrible to describe, and no one can take us out of His hands.

As demonstrated in scripture (Ananias and Sapphira – Acts 5:1-10), God will even take the lives of believers to prevent them from eventually rejecting the faith because of unrepentant sin, but He will not reject them because of sin.

Paul demonstrated that there are even times when God's mercy toward believers is exhibited through extreme discipline in order to prevent them from ultimately rejecting their faith. In the name of Jesus, Paul ordered the church at Corinth to remove a man from their fellowship who was guilty of having an adulterous affair with his mother-in-law. The purpose of removing him from fellowship was to allow the man to be buffeted by Satan so that he would come to his senses and repent.

*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, **so that his spirit may be saved** in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:5 NASB (emphasis is the author's)*

The unmistakable implication here is that unless the man repents he will ultimately reject his faith in Christ.

Our inclusion in the redemptive covenant in Christ does not negate our free will. We can choose to obey the revealed will of the Lord, or we can trample it underfoot. But the continuous trampling underfoot of the revealed will of the Lord leads to the development of a seared conscious, and with a seared conscious we no longer “hear” with spiritual ears or “see” with the eyes of our hearts.

At the same time, because we have lost our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, we may be opening the doors to demonic influence.

At some point, then, when Jesus is no longer real to the one with a seared conscious, he is in danger of rejecting his faith. This would likely be accompanied by extreme forms of demonic deception and, ultimately, demonic possession once Christ was renounced.

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. 1 John 5:16 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

The sin "leading to" (ultimately resulting in) death is the chronic sin of continually rejecting the influence of the Holy Spirit so that one ultimately develops a "seared" conscience, a conscience that is no longer able to "hear" the voice of the Shepherd or "hear" the still small voice of the Spirit. Thus what we once believed in our hearts and confessed with our mouths is no longer real to us.

Eventually, then, under the influence of demonic spirits, we will renounce our faith in Jesus Christ.

Remember that "apostasy" in the Old Testament was not necessarily a permanent condition, because faith, too, brought only a temporary change. King Saul is a prime example of an Old Testament "believer" who sometimes acted in obedience to the direct, specific revealed will of God (i.e. believing in the heart) and sometimes rejected his "faith" and was specifically led and empowered by demons in a contrary "faith".

Modern usage of the term "the faith" is a general reference to the body of beliefs of any religion or denomination, but the original use of the term by Paul is used only to describe those who have believed in their hearts and confessed with their mouths that Jesus is the Christ. In this he is not talking about a body of beliefs, but of genuine faith.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times...(when?)... some...(individuals)... will fall away from the faith...(revolt and leave their initial standing)..., paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. 1 Timothy 4:1 NASB (inserts and emphasis are the author's)

This shocking truth has been nullified by the presumptive doctrine of the unconditional, eternal security of the believer, and many will depart from the faith because they believed the lie and the tradition of "once saved, always saved" and were not prepared to endure tribulation.

Apostasy has not been common in the church up to this time, and I know of no New Testament example of apostasy. But examine the circumstances that Paul says born again Christians will face in the time of the great apostasy:

1. There will be false prophets empowered by deceitful spirits to teach doctrines of demons (accompanied by false signs and wonders);
2. These false prophets will be hypocritical former believers with seared consciences who teach and advocate doctrines of demons.

False prophets will come from and infiltrate the true church in a time of intense persecution, tribulation, betrayal, and deception greater than at any other time in history, greater even than we can imagine, even though we have been warned.

The apostasy Paul refers to does characterize a part of the true church during end times, but it does not characterize the entire church.

There will be a holy remnant of wise virgins.

As we examine the parable we should note that the entire true church has not, yet, heard this announcement. I should not have to make a case for this conclusion. The awakening of the entire “wise” and “foolish” church will be an apparent departure from the current status quo.

We may assume that it is the Holy Spirit who will make the “announcement” as it corresponds with some event or series of events, such as the opening of the first four seals of Revelation (the great war, famine, and pandemic disease that kills 25% of the world’s population).

At the time of the announcement, even the foolish virgins, those who are a part of the true church but are participants in the “foolishness” stated previously, will have “heard” the announcement, but, because of “foolishness”, they will run out of oil as the church undergoes tribulation, trial, and persecution unlike anything we have, yet, experienced.

The specific words used to describe the announcement give us a clue concerning the nature of the announcement itself.

‘But at midnight there was a shout, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’

The “shout” or “cry” is the word transliterated as *krauge* (Strong’s #2906). This is properly understood as an outcry or clamor like shouts from the guards on the watch tower or the screeching cry of a raven warning other ravens of danger.

And the word translated as “Behold” is not like an introduction but is more like, “Listen up! Pay attention!”

Whatever this event or series of events might be it will wake up the entire church all over the world. It will be identifiable in scripture, and it will not need a lot of explaining. Like the sound of sirens in the street it will be universally recognizable, and will get the entire church’s attention.

The return of Israel in diaspora to become a nation again on May 14, 1948 is the first prophetic fulfillment to indicate that we are in end times.

That event, though, has not sparked a general awakening of the entire church. Nor has the recent escalation of “birth pains” as described in the Lord’s prophecy to His disciples concerning the “signs” of His impending return. False Christs, false prophets (which, as a point of interest, does include false religion, but is primarily a reference to false prophets within the professing church), wars and rumors of wars, pestilence, famine, and earthquakes have all escalated at an alarming and measurable rate. This prophetic escalation has also been generally noticed by the church, but without a remarkable awakening.

Two events stand out as being the potential events that will awaken the ten virgins.

First, the rise of the fourth beast kingdom when the Antichrist rises to power through conquest over three nations and the voluntary submission of sovereignty by seven others is specific enough and dramatic enough to be recognized by the entire church, and, at the very least, this 1st seal event of Revelation will certainly be noticed by the virgins who are already awake.

Secondly, after a nuclear world war beginning in the Middle East but impacting the entire world, preceded and followed by famine, and world-wide pandemic disease, one prophetic event

stands out as potentially being the groomsmen's announcement (assuming we don't wake up during the world war, followed by famine and disease), "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him."

That event is the seven year treaty (covenant) that will include Israel and "many nations". I don't think it will be possible for Christians to miss this event, and the shofar will be blown all over the internet, television, and the radio with the message, "**Behold, the bridegroom!**"

Even those who teach a pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" of church only saints have pointed to this major event as the beginning of the tribulation. Imagine what will happen in Christian churches, fellowships, and homes all over the world when this event takes place and pre-tribbers are busy recalculating their erroneous interpretations of scripture.

It seems to me that this event, especially if it is accompanied by a prior world-wide economic crash, a middle eastern nuclear war that potentially includes the United States, famines and pandemic disease that wipe out twenty-five percent of the world's population, would definitely qualify as the announcement, "**Behold, the Bridegroom! Come out to meet Him.**"

It is also the event that will cause those who have believed in a pre-tribulation resurrection-"rapture" of church only saints to cry out in confusion, doubt, and mis-trust of those who have misled them, "Where is the promise of His coming for the church before the tribulation?"

Dispensational theology views everything in the book of Revelation after chapter 3 as being irrelevant for the church, but they ignore the fact that the Revelation of Jesus Christ was given to John for the church, to be read in the Christian Bible by Christians, both then and now.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches ..."
Revelation 22:16 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

For whom? Israel? No. The 144,000? No. The entire message of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, given to John, an apostle of the church, is for the church.

The virgins without oil are reminiscent of the church of Sardis (Revelation 3:2,3) the church with a good reputation, but who are admonished to "wake up", and the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22) whose lukewarmness causes the Lord to threaten to spew them out of His mouth, and who are admonished to buy gold (tested faith) from Him, white clothes (of true righteousness), and salve so they can "see" with the eyes of their hearts.

I will not comment further on this passage, but will allow the Lord to make application as He will. See [Who Are The Laodiceans?](#)

What a shocking time of disappointment and discouragement for the foolish virgins who have been let down by the major evangelical denominations and ministries of the day.

All ten "hear" the announcement by the groomsmen that the Bridegroom is coming, and this announcement takes place at midnight, just before the arrival of the Bridegroom. The indication here is that the timeframe between the announcement that causes all of the "virgins" to awaken and the actual arrival of the bridegroom is very short (perhaps as short as seven years, if the event I have just described is our public wake up call.)

The "birth pains" described by the Lord in response to the original disciples' question had absolutely nothing to do with them individually. They may have assumed that they would be present, but His message was to the generation of the church that would hear the announcement, "**Behold the Bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!**"

There is no way to sugar coat this. The “foolish” as we have defined them, will fall away, and their fate will be worse than if they had never been born again. Endurance, even greater than the endurance required by the original disciples and their followers will be required by the “wise” virgins, but this endurance will be empowered by the “latter rains” outpouring of the Spirit.

The apostasy or the great falling away takes place in the church during the tribulation as a result of tribulation, trials, and persecution, including betrayal by those in the church, that born again believers will universally experience during that time right up to the last day.

Wise virgins who have made obedient faith responses to the Lord’s instructions to the churches, though many will be martyred, will endure and be received by Him on the last day.

These important instructions include:

1. Return to our first love, doing the works of faith we did in the beginning;
2. Be willing to suffer trials, tribulations, and persecutions, even unto death;
3. Reject false teaching, even if it is popular with those around us;
4. Do not tolerate false prophets and the doctrines of demons, even if that means leaving the denomination or the fellowship we are involved with;
5. Wake up from our slumber (and our religious works devoid of truth and genuine faith);
6. Buy gold (faith refined by fire) from Him;
7. Obtain white clothes of genuine righteousness by making obedient faith responses to His commands, and salve for our eyes so that we can “see” His truth by revelation.

Foolish virgins who are not prepared for this time of extreme tribulation, trial, and universal persecution will reject the faith and will not be received by Him. The cause of their apostasy is a result of the following:

1. Failure to keep and maintain the pure doctrine of the original apostles;
2. Allowing the introduction of false teaching, false doctrine and, even, the doctrines of demons, into accepted church practice;
3. Substitution of religious acts and works for genuine acts and works of faith;
4. A reliance on priests, prophets, pastors, and teachers to tell us what to believe instead of teaching believers how to receive and confirm truth for themselves;
5. The acceptance of division, controversy, and religious in-fighting as being “normal” for the church, and;
6. Both the failure to rely on and promote the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, and the corruption and perversion of doctrines and practices related to the Holy Spirit.

As I prepared this commentary I read and meditated on the message to the seven churches (Revelation 2 and 3), and the seriousness of those messages struck me as it has never struck me before.

Therefore, I recommend that anyone who has been impacted by this message do a similar in-depth study of Revelation 2 and 3 accompanied by much prayer and meditation.

The important indication here is that the “foolish” virgins will hear the announcement and begin trimming their wicks with the assumption that they are “wise”. The rapid and highly confrontational division between the “wise” and “foolish” virgins at this time will not save the foolish virgins who are deceived by false doctrine and erroneous interpretations of scripture. They will not “hear” what the wise virgins tell them, which is how to “get oil from the vendor” (God as the Spirit of Truth), and will, instead, continue to defend false doctrine and erroneous interpretations of scripture, ultimately leading to their complete yielding to doctrines of demons and a rejection of their faith in Christ.

Because the foolish virgins are not empowered by active faith during trials and temptations they will become bitter against God, not remembering, even, the early days of their faith when they eagerly followed the Lord as true disciples.

It is my assumption, then, that none of the revivals of the church, including the Charismatic renewal, would qualify as the trimming of wicks that takes place in the true church after the announcement has been made. But I believe that the prophetic passage of Ephesians 4:11-16 describes what the wise virgins will experience in this time of awakening, and the Lord’s prayer in John 17 describes the brief time of unity and glory they will experience, even in the midst of great tribulation.

The act of trimming the lamps is the pruning process (trimming away the sinful parts and the doctrinal errors so that the glory may be revealed – ie. our response to the Lord’s message to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3)) that takes place in the church after the announcement, and I believe this announcement will soon be heard by both wise and foolish virgins all around the world.

The church at large, though, has lost its sense of history. We think that the last hundred years of church history has established the norm for our times, as if being asleep and being lukewarm (divided by “winds of doctrine”) will be our condition until kingdom come. In our arrogance we also think that whatever is happening in our church fellowship, our particular denomination, or in America is what is happening everywhere. But the history of the world and the history of the church are both dynamic, not static, and what is happening in our individual church fellowships, our denominations, and in America is only a part of what is happening in the body of Christ at large.

What is happening is change in accordance with prophecy and the purposes of God, and, for the wise virgins, this will be a time of intense persecution and trouble, but also a time in which ***we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*** as we bring in the great last days harvest of souls and fulfill the commission given to the church in Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

