

THE WISDOM OF CULTIVATING OIL IN THIS HOUR

PART I OF 2

Matthew 25:1-13

I. It is Supremely Wise for the Body of Christ to Understand Matthew 25

- A. Matthew 25 is the second part of Jesus' answer to His disciples' question about the "*end of the age*" (Matthew 24:3)
- B. The moments before Jesus returns will be filled with great social, political and economic crises that will deeply shake the emotions, beliefs and worldview of billions of people.
- C. After describing the signs and conditions before His return in chapter 24, Jesus now tells three parables to describe how His disciples will want to prepare themselves for His return.
- D. Jesus made these parables intentionally alarming, because He loves us and doesn't want us to be caught off-guard and unprepared. A good Father informs His children about life-threatening realities so that they can be equipped to face, and overcome them.
- E. It is vital that we invest time to dialogue with the Lord now about Matthew 24 and 25.
 - 1. We want to have clarity on the Biblical narrative of the end times.
 - 2. We want to have clarity on what kind of preparation we need to make for this hour in history.
- F. A little clarity will produce great stability and confidence in our soul while our heart is being buffeted by the extreme end-times' events. Putting a little effort into understanding these chapters now is like making sure you have enough water, food, medical supplies etc. in your basement for the storm that's on its way. We don't want to face the great end-times' crises disconnected from what the Bible has to say about them.
- G. The Holy Spirit's supremely helpful question to us now is: *Are you cultivating the kind of lifestyle that is producing a love and faith that is strong enough to endure the trials that are coming?*

II. The Parable of the Bridesmaids is a Lesson *about* the Church for the Church

- A. It's important to know that this parable is aimed at challenging and stirring the Church. This isn't a parable about the non-Christians and the Christians. It's a parable about those who have prepared for Jesus' arrival, and those that have not. This makes the story all the more alarming.
- B. How do we know this parable is about the Church, and not about the lost and the redeemed?
 - 1. All ten bridesmaids are waiting eagerly for the Bridegroom. When the Bridegroom arrives, all exhibit passion to go in and be with Him. All want to be in obedience to the Bridegroom. All identify themselves in relationship to the Bridegroom.
 - 2. Some had more oil, while others had less, but all have *had* oil; that which was necessary to go in with the Bridegroom.
- C. The distinction between the wise and foolish bridesmaids is how Paul reprimands the *whole church* in Ephesus - ***See then that you walk circumspectly; not as fools, but as wise - redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*** (Ephesians 5:15) Paul is addressing Christians. He is warning believers to not give themselves to issues, activities, lifestyles and attitudes that will *dissipate* (v. 18) and cause God's life in them to diminish and waste away. Jesus has just told the disciples that in the last days there would be many in His household who's ***love has grown cold*** (Matthew 24:12). The foolish are those who Paul described as those who have ***departed from the faith giving heed to deceiving spirits...*** (1 Timothy 4:1) and have ***suffered*** the ***shipwreck*** of faith (1 Timothy 1:19).
- D. The point of this lesson isn't to argue how much faith one needs to be saved. The point that Jesus is making is that we do not want to be found in the shallow end of the pool, having accumulated minimal strength to face the great hour of trouble. The warnings of Jesus and the New Testament writers are clear. Faith wanes. Love grows cold. Deception and the destruction of souls is a real danger in our world.

II. It's Vital that We Appreciate the Great Value of Oil

- A. We not only need oil, we need to know that we have oil, so that we may joyfully herald and participate in the Bridegroom's arrival. We want to be among those who *love His appearing* (2 Timothy 4:8) when He returns.
- B. We need oil because the Holy Spirit is passionately committed to preparing the Bride for the day of the Bridegroom's arrival. The Holy Spirit is zealous that we, the Church, would be aligned with Jesus' purposes when He returns to rule over the earth. (See Ephesians 5:25-27 and Revelation 19:7)
- C. We need oil because the consequences of *not having oil* are so dire. Half of the bridesmaids do not enter into the wedding feast. The foolish bridesmaids "alarm" tell us we will want the oil. We do not want to hear the Lord say: **"I do not know you."** (Matthew 25:12)
- D. In the days ahead, there will be many things that will pose difficulties for the well being of our heart and soul. These difficulties will come in the form of many judgments upon the earth; judgments where millions will die. Millions will be more than inconvenienced. Billions will struggle for life-sustaining resources; be tempted to look to governmental solutions; be tempted to go to war with others over injustices; be tempted to even curse God and die. If we don't have oil, we will be greatly tempted to be offended by others who will pose an increasing threat to our life and our family's lives. We will be severely tempted to be offended by God and His judgements upon the earth. Oil is the lubricant that guards our hearts against the friction of offense.
Jesus said to his disciples, 'Stumbling blocks are sure to come...' (Luke 17:1)
Blessed is anyone who is not offended because of Me. (Luke 7:23)
- E. Consequently, anything that keeps us from cultivating an abundance of oil in this hour is a distraction; a dangerous distraction. We can give ourselves to all other kinds of activities, but if we're being kept from cultivating oil a.) we're missing the point of the hour and the context that God has set us up for, and b.) we're allowing our soul to remain in a compromised state.

III. It's Important to Be Aware of What the Oil is *Not*

- A. There are two prominent *wrong interpretations* of what the oil is. Both actually produce a relaxed, lukewarm, laissez-faire attitude toward Jesus' startling story.
- B. It's important that we understand what these wrong interpretations are so that we do not console ourselves when the Holy Spirit is giving us no such consolation about the level of our oil.
- C. The two misleading interpretations are
 - 1. *The oil is the "Holy Spirit"*. Though the oil comes from interaction with the Holy Spirit, oil is *not* itself, a synonym for possessing the "Holy Spirit".
 - a. Where do we have a surplus of the Holy Spirit?
 - b. How does one go and buy some *more of* the Holy Spirit?
 - c. How does one not immediately receive the Holy Spirit, when one asks for the Holy Spirit?
 - 2. *The oil is "faith"*. Though it will ultimately manifest as faith, the oil is not a word-picture for faith.
 - a. A person, like the thief at the cross, can immediately have faith.
 - b. All ten bridesmaids had enough faith to know Who the Bridegroom was, and anticipated entering into the wedding feast with Him.

IV. It's Valuable to Understand Scriptural Parallels to Oil

- A. Below are eight scriptures that give us clues about the nature of the oil.
- B. Each of these scriptures also describe a Kingdom dynamic that is consistent with what Jesus tells us about the oil:
It's precious. It's costly to obtain. It can be accumulated in abundance. But it cannot be transferred from one person to another.
 - 1. The Matthew 25 oil is the **one thing**, the **seeking, dwelling, beholding, inquiring**, the **seeking** of the Lord's **Face** and the **waiting on the Lord** of Psalm 27:4, 8, 14
 - 2. The Matthew 25 oil is the **abiding in Me, and I in you**, of John 15:4 & 9

3. The Matthew 25 oil is what we hear Paul praying for the Ephesians church in Ephesians 1:17-18: ***that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...***

4. The Matthew 25 oil is what we see Mary obtaining in Luke 10:39, when ***Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word***. Indeed, Jesus Himself says, ***Mary chose the one thing that was needed, the good thing that cannot be taken away from her***.

5. The Matthew 25 oil is what we see Moses and Joshua receiving in Exodus 33:11 - ***So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to His friend. Moses would return to the camp, but his servant, Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle day or night***.

6. The Matthew 25 oil is what the disciples were saturating themselves with in the upper room in Acts 1 & 2 as they ***continued with one accord in prayer and supplication*** prior to being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

7. The Matthew 25 oil is synonymous with the ***gold refined in the fire*** in Revelation 3:18 that Jesus counsels the Laodicean Church to ***buy from Him, that they may be rich***.

8. The Matthew 25 oil is what Paul was ready to give everything up for in Philippians 3:10 ***that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death***.

V. Encouragement to Engage the Holy Spirit About the Oil Yourself

- A. At the end of the day, it's vital that we seek God's face for ourselves about the identity of the oil. Although a teaching can point the way, there's no substitute for having the Holy Spirit impart His life-giving truths to your heart Himself.
- B. As the Lord highlights the value of oil, and our great need for oil we can rejoice knowing that we are in a blessed place. It's the Lord's supreme kindness in this season to expose our weakness and lack of oil, and then to provide us with protected time and space to cultivate a value for the oil. If you're feeling an awareness and craving for the abundance of oil in your life, rejoice. The Holy Spirit has planted that desire in your heart, and it's taking root.
Blessed are the poor, (those who know that they lack) for their's is the Kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5:3)
- C. In response to this desire, it's right for us to repent of not having pursued what the Holy Spirit has ardently wanted you, and the whole Bride of Christ to be filled with. Our repentance is an act of humility that acknowledges His gracious and patient work on our hearts. It's an act of contrition that says we're sorry for having given our Christian lives to things which do not abundantly profit. It's a pledge to no longer give our lives to dissipation. It's a sign of our readiness to respond in obedience to His desire. It's a declaration of the will to embrace a new value. It's a beacon to heaven signaling that our hearts are now ready to go and buy and receive.

Next Week (Part II): **"The Way to Cultivate Oil in This Hour"**