

**THE
TEN VIRGINS**

J.R. Anderson

*The
Ten Virgins*

Agape Chapel Ministries
P.O. Box 59084
Norwalk, CA 90652
USA

Booklets & Tracts are given freely.
Do not sell!

Web: www.sounddoctrine.net
e-mail: acm@sounddoctrine.net

J.R. Anderson

perfect, be ye perfect. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." "Come out and be separate." "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

4. Learn to be always ready. A day's notice is too long; a moment's notice is too long. Be you ready; ready in a moment's notice to go forth. "Occupy till I come." That is the law He left with His people. Let the solemn lessons of this Word, the sifting dispensations of His providence, the trying things that befall the church, and the near approach of death, all combine to induce you to watch and pray, that when the Master comes, He may find you ready through the power of His grace. Amen.

"The Ten Virgins"

(Preached September 14th, 1851).

Matthew xxv, 1-13 v.

WE live on the borders of eternity, and are much nearer to it than we are ready to believe. We are placed under a dispensation of *mercy*, which hath so far run its course, and is still silently advancing towards its consummation; and we are distinctly told that this consummation will soon be reached. The day of each man's death, is, in effect, to him the end of the world. The dispensation of mercy, of which we speak, passes through various successive stages, and these are set before us in Scripture under lively and significant parables; and our Lord having occasion to lay before His disciples some prophetic views of things which were to take place after His day, takes occasion to set forth the aspect which at that season, the dispensation of grace should wear.

Verse I. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

By the kingdom of heaven we are to understand the economy of grace in Christ Jesus for the salvation of sinners of this world. The plan of it is to be found in the infinite mind of Him of Whom, and through Whom, and to Whom, are all things. Its delineation is to be seen in the Word, where all is made known concerning this kingdom that is necessary to us,—necessary to an interest in it, and the enjoyment of the benefits which that interest confers. Its development is committed to the hands of Him Who is faithful to Him that appointed Him, and He hath this honour as a reward

for His humiliation and death, for the redemption of transgressors. In His hand, the development proceeds under the external means of grace, in connection with the visible church, and through the efficacious work of the *Holy Ghost*. And the development proceeds from age to age, and will proceed to its completion at the end of the world; and then He shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them that work iniquity, and shall take His saints home to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also.

The parable our Lord here presents is intended to set forth this kingdom at a particular period of its development, and under aspects suitable to that period. And seeing that this is to each of you in effect the termination of your life here, the parable ought to be applied to each under this view. The time will come with regard to each man, as the time will come with regard to the world at large, when this parable shall be strikingly illustrated.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps." In this there is an allusion to the well-known custom among the Jews, and that prevails still more or less in Eastern countries, of celebrating their marriages in the night, of a certain number of persons being selected as companions of the bride on the one hand, and so many as companions of the bridegroom on the other. It points to the practice of the companions of the bride assembling in her father's house for the purpose of attending her when called to go out and meet the bridegroom, when he came to take her to his own house. It was celebrated at *night*, hence the use of "lamps" or torches, consisting, it is said, of a rod of iron, with a piece of linen wound round it, and dipped in oil.

They "went forth to meet the bridegroom." This is their design; for this purpose they were gathered; with this view they made the preparation of supplying themselves with lamps or torches. By "virgins" it is plain we are to understand professed followers of Jesus Christ. In this parable we have nothing to do directly with the world—it is solely with the *visible* church. Neither have we to do with the mixed multitude of the

the foolish. They lost the day; they came short of the end; they fell, and were broken, and perished. What is the practical conclusion? Verse 13: "Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

IN CONCLUSION.

1. Learn that it is right to be concerned about the coming of Jesus Christ, the bridegroom of the church, and going forth to meet Him. May God make you to be concerned! And make you do what is right! Look to yourselves. That is not a safe state in which you are, if unconcerned. That condition is one in which you will not be allowed to remain. You will be cut off from your privileges. "To him that hath shall be given: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Seek to be so concerned as to warrant you to make a profession. It is a poor concern that cannot support a profession. It is a poor profession that has not a concern to support it. Be concerned till you reach a profession such as you are called to make. Make no profession unless you have a concern such as can support it.

2. See the distinction amongst those that profess. Take care and profess aright. Cast in your lot with the wise. Beware of the foolish. Do not be content with a name. Do not pride yourselves in your gifts. Do not rest in your privileges. You may have light; refreshing, enlightening, strengthening; you may have all that, and it may amount to nothing more than the blaze of a lamp. Seek that you be born of God, partakers of a Divine nature; that Christ be formed in you the hope of glory; that you be temples of the Holy Ghost; that you bear the image of God: that you have a profession, and principle to support it; that you have a position, and permanence in that position, and then there is no fear of you.

3. Beware of slumbering and sleeping. The man that thinks he is beyond the power of slumbering, has begun to nod. Seek that you may be awake, and kept awake; wherein there has been backsliding, may you return; where there is decay, may grace strengthen the things which remain; wherein your work has not been

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.'

Here the two classes once more meet, and appear to be assimilated. They both "slumbered and slept." You may not think it wonderful that the foolish virgins slept; and when you consider what is in the wise, you need not wonder that they slept too. It is a great mystery that any of the children of men are awakened. It is a great mystery that any of them are ever *kept* awake. From this sleep they were awakened with the intimation that the bridegroom was approaching; and here the *difference* begins to show itself. They both arose and trimmed their lamps. The lamps of the foolish virgins are still burning, but the flame is exceeding low. They saw plainly that their light was fast going out. How they begin to tremble! What a hurry they are in, turning to their fellows, "Give us of your oil." They say, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you." The wise were not in a condition to do it. They answered mildly yet firmly. They were obliged to refuse, but they refused with dignity. We have, through grace, enough for ourselves, but none to spare; if we keep our own lamps burning, that is all we can reckon on; if we are in a condition to meet the bridegroom ourselves, that is all we can look for; if we get into the marriage, that is all we can look warranted to expect. "Go and buy for yourselves." This is in reference to the oil they needed for their lamps. It would run wild with popular instruction to infer from this, that spiritual food which is required to keep our lamps burning, requires to be bought. It requires to be bought; yet *without money and without price*.

Verses 10—12: "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. Afterwards 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.'"

Here appears the wisdom of the wise virgins. They gained the day. They reached the end of faith, even the salvation of their souls. You here see the folly of

visible church that make no profession at all; we pass to those who bear the Christian name. Nor even at this point in our day will we be able to make much of the parable. It never enters the head of thoughtless and presumptuous people, that their standing as professors infers that they should be different from their neighbours. But it imposes duties upon them from which others are exempt, and requires at their hand what is not required at the hand of others. Let the question come to the consciences of every one now present; wherein do you differ from the world around you? What have you more than they? What do you more than others? Now, try if you can, to form any distinct idea of virgins that are in *no* way to be distinguished from those that never look after the bridegroom, and have no possible connection with Him. But it is to be hoped there are still a little handful who may be regarded as professors: that not only call themselves virgins, but have *lamps*; who wear the appearance of being disposed to go forth, and meet the bridegroom. It is for you to consider, each one for himself, whether you can *really* lay claim to this name, whether you are in possession of this mark, whether you occupy the position of one that appears to go forth and meet the bridegroom. Have you any name that answers at all to the name that occurs in this parable? You bear the name of Christians. Where did you get it? How did you come by it? What did it cost you? Was there any stir in your souls when you came by this name? Were your hearts in any way agitated? Did it cost you the pangs of the new birth? The Judge of all the earth will take unto Him His majesty and power, and these eyes of His, which are as a flame of fire, will separate the precious from the vile: He will speedily strip every one of the name he bears, that did not come by that name in a spiritual way, a holy way, and therefore a legitimate way: He will allow to enter through the gates of that city: He will let abide in His sanctuary only those who bear a name laid up for them in His love before the foundation of the world. Every name that will be allowed at the judgment day will have in it the infinitely sweet savour of the Father's everlasting love.

Consider whether the name you bear has ever emitted to your own spiritual sense, or sent forth to the spiritual perception of others, any such sweet odour. Every name that will be allowed at the judgment day, that will be admitted into glory, *must* have in it something of the odour of the death accomplished at Jerusalem. He is no Christian in reality that has not been, by the power of the Holy Ghost, in faith unfeigned, washed in the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. No man has come near that Fountain without having somewhat of the unspeakably sweet savour of His name, whose name is as ointment poured forth. That name must have in it the image of God. This is His purpose; He loved them so as to make them like Himself. What have you to show as the effect of that love, as evidence that you are objects of it? Are you like Him that loves with a love that *transforms* those to whom it is made known in a gracious saving manner? No man comes to taste of this love of God, but through the grace of the Holy Spirit working in the soul; and through this operation, this love hath a transforming power. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Now, try the name you bear by these simple tests. Some may think them rather severe. These are the tests that will try you at the judgment day. Our preaching and your hearing is not the thing it ought to be, if it has not drawn us through grace under their salutary influence. Do not put away these tests, till, in the light of truth, you are enabled to prove them more sweeping than the tests that will be applied at the judgment day.

Where are the virgins now? Where will we find those that bear a name that looks in the smallest degree like that now sketched? Where will we get even a decent imitation of it, to say nothing of the reality? Yet the care of each should be to beware of the imitation, and *seek* after the *reality*.

What have you as professors? These virgins had lamps. They were things required by the occasion: they were necessary to be held up in order to guide the

separation. The character of the foolish is first given. They have got a name and suitable furniture. They were in an apparently favourable posture. What did they *want*? They wanted something to sustain all this. A name will not do, unless there is something abiding to uphold it. A torch will not do, unless there be a vessel of oil. Assembling in the house will not do, unless they be prepared for all emergencies. The foolish virgins wanted this support, this fountain of supply, this inward guarantee of persevering; they took no oil. You may have a name, but not that which will sustain the name out and out. You may have the gifts and profession, but not that grace which will permanently feed all and preserve it from decay. You may be in a position, but you may not have that gracious principle which will enable you to keep it—you will be driven from it. Look heedfully to yourselves, whether it be so with you or not.

"The wise took oil in their lamps." They had a name in common with the others, but they had *that* which insured their continuing to bear that name. They had a lamp, but they had got what insured the lamp continuing to burn. They took a position, but they had what insured their maintaining it to the very end. It is well for us that trials occur in the present state. These are foreshadowings of the great judgment, ever occurring in the experience of the people of God. Sifting times are sent on the soul preparative to the great sifting time. You may by these trials ascertain whether you have that which will enable you to bear the name of virgins; whether you have oil in your vessels; whether you are in a position to meet the bridegroom. A man that is not tried is no Christian. A man that is not from day to day exercised with trials, is not in health. A man that does not stand the trial is none of Christ's. Here the trial comes:—

Verses 5—9: "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

His Bride for the marriage day, and will come to fetch her home to Himself. Did not the virgins know from what quarter the bridegroom was to come? Is not this involved in the very purpose to go and meet Him? Could we say they were in a condition to do so, if they were in total ignorance whence He was to come? Have your souls ever been turned towards the eternal world? This is a spiritual object, exceedingly suitable to the soul; it is in its proper position when looking towards eternity. As well not have eyes in your head, as have them, and *never* turn them towards eternity. What is the good of your souls in your bodies, if these souls are ever cleaving to the dust, your faces to the world, and your backs to eternity? I do not say the soul always succeeds in getting a look into the eternal world. It is often disappointed in its expectations; but it struggles on, strives after growing familiarity with the eternal world, strives after a mansion in eternity, so that the soul may have a dwelling place to go to. It wants to be *prepared* for heaven. It is a holy house: so the soul follows after holiness. It is a peaceable house; so the soul, in as far as lies in its power, lives peaceably with all men. It is a house of love: so the soul has love to God, unfeigned love to the brethren, and love to all men. It is a house of purity, glory and blessedness, and the soul would be transformed, so as to be ready to enter into it. Where are people to be found seeking graces of this sort, looking after a heavenly home? "Are ye not carnal and walk as men?" Can you say, "Our conversation is in heaven"?

Verses 2-4: "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. I apprehend it has been made clear that there are very few virgins in our day. It is an abuse of the language, downright mockery, to call everyone a virgin, that is a member of a church. Try yourselves with this Scriptural rule; you will find it sharp; it will cut to the quick, and lay you exceeding low; "Blessed is the man that feareth always." Multitudes suffer everlasting damage by not fearing. But suppose we have ten virgins; now comes the

steps of the procession with which they expected to join themselves. It would have been preposterous for these virgins to have gone out without lamps or torches; for it was *night* in which the procession was to be formed. The virgins knew that it was night, and were called to prepare accordingly. No one for an instant would have presumed to take any part in these solemn proceedings, without this preparation. Is there anything about *you*, at all like the lamps borne by these virgins? Is there anything in your *possession*, that would be worth your while to bring forth, in the presence of Jesus Christ and His dear people? Have you anything that would warrant you to mingle among the throng of His attendants? Who amongst you have ever discovered your spiritual destitution? Who of you were ever burdened with a sense of spiritual darkness? Who of you have ever been made excision of by the law? Who of you have ever made excision of yourselves, through the light of truth shining in your souls, with overwhelming power?

Where did these virgins get their lamps? Surely they were once without them. How did they come by them? Was it easily or with difficulty? Had they always the conceit that they were entitled to a place among the bridegroom's attendants? Ask now; especially you that make such a profession, if you know what it is to be in a state of spiritual destitution, to be without Christ in the world, to be excluded from spiritual life? It is in this condition poor sinners are found, who get a lamp that will *never* go out. It is a godless people, that are in Christ Jesus reconciled to God; it is a Christless people that by faith of Divine operation have interest in Christ; it is a carnal people that are made spiritual; they are blind people that have their eyes opened; they are impotent people that have strength given them; they are impotent people that have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

Now, are you of this description in your own eyes? My poor people, are you destitute enough that the God of salvation should cast His eye upon you? Have you been upon the dunghill, so as to have been within reach

of Him Who takes off the dunghill? Have you been blind enough for God to get the glory of giving you sight?; carnal enough for God to get the glory of making you spiritual?; weak enough for God to get the glory of making you strong?; near enough to hell for God to get the glory of bringing you to Heaven? What have you now? Are there not plenty of you bearing a profession that are not at all exercised in your minds from day to day with troubles of this sort? Do not be offended when we say, Give an account of yourselves, of the lamp you bear. How did you come by it? Where did you get it? What price did you pay for it? Be always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you for the hope that is in you. What posture are you in? Are you in a posture at all like those who go forth to meet the bridegroom?

The virgins met in the bride's house. We are not told where they came from; they may have come from all points of the compass. Neither are we told what they were like; not two, perhaps, exactly alike. They met in one place; they all had one name, and were assembled together evidently for one purpose. Do you know anything of the Bride, the Church of the Living God, to be married to the Lamb that was slain? Oh time! rapidly roll on, and bring about the day when the joyful cry shall be heard, "The marriage of the Lamb is come." The Father sought out a bride for His Son—not amongst the highest of the angels, unfallen and everblessed; but from among the sinful children of men, apostate, corrupt, damned. If you are not apostate creatures, you will never be married to the Son of God; if you are not corrupt, you will never be married to the Son of God; if you are not damned you will never be married to the Son of God. Now, put in a claim if you can. Can you come at length to say, He may marry me if He will, although I be *all* He says. There is no barrier in the way. Apostacy is no barrier; for they are apostate creatures He came to marry. Corruption is no barrier; for they are corrupt creatures He came to marry. Condemnation is no barrier; for they are condemned creatures He came to marry. Oh! poor sinners! will you go with this Man? Satan is

saying, "You filthy, corrupt, diabolical creature, will you presume to think of being a bride to Christ?" Oh! resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Would you know the Bride if you saw her? She has a certain visible form: comely ordinances are appointed in her. You may come to the outer court of the church; you may see what lies within the range of the carnal eye: you may be wrought upon in your natural powers, your natural affections, your natural consciences: your natural desires may be touched: you may be induced to join yourselves with the virgins, and take up what lamps you may get. But do you know what it is to distinguish between the church visible and invisible? Have you distinguished between the form and the reality? How does it please you to come near the true church? Do you find it good to associate with her, and those truly belonging to her? Or, does her stern aspect trouble you? Does her severe voice cut you? Do her rebukes throw you into a state of agitation? You *must* be pleased with her out and out, if you would pass for those who have really joined themselves to her. How did you get in? Sometimes by a very wide door. Sometimes no account is taken of you whatever. Sometimes by a pretty straight door. But the straightest door in the visible church is wide, compared with the door into the invisible church. Jesus Christ says, "I am the Door." You cannot get into the invisible church but through Jesus Christ. There is no getting into Him, but by the Spirit of God taking of the things that are His, and showing them to your souls. Divine justice opened the door in demanding an *atonement* for sin. Divine mercy opens the door in the application of blood to the soul.

Can you get to the bride in this way? How can you say you go out to meet the bridegroom, if you are not found to be in the bride's house? This is the starting point: this is the place of rendezvous; how is it possible you can profess to go forth to meet the bridegroom, if you have never seen the brides' lovely face; if you have not esteemed her the excellent of the earth, in whom is all your delight? Have your souls *ever* been turned towards eternity? Christ is to return. He is preparing