

A TALE OF TEN VIRGINS

by Tom Stewart

Stewart's exposition of Christ's parable of the ten virgins, exploring themes of spiritual readiness, watchfulness, and the distinction between genuine and superficial faith as believers await Christ's return.

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A Tale of Ten Virgins Or, A Sober Warning to Those Who Look for the Pre-Tribulational Rapture
“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luk 21:36). by Tom Stewart 2-26-98
What Saith the Scripture?

Since I eagerly anticipate the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, I will also pay careful heed to this warning.

Joy should be in our hearts as we prepare for our LORD’s coming for us. “Rejoice in the LORD
always: and again I say, Rejoice.” (Php 4:4). “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him:
for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready” (Rev 19:7).

We are so close to our last sorrow and tear on this planet, we can hardly contain ourselves. “And
God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow,
nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev
21:4). What love God has for us to personally wipe away the tears from our eyes! Be still my soul.
Run with patience. “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” (Heb 12:1). Think of the good men that went before us,
who are now watching us approach the finish line. Adam desires to see as many as possible
escape from “the sin which doth so easily beset us”. Enoch desires that we, too, would finish our
race doing the only thing that can possibly please God, and that is to trust God. “By faith Enoch
was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him:
for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is
impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a
rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:5-6).

Patience and faith. We know that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom
10:17), but something more is required of us than simply hearing the Bible. Since faith is trusting
God about whatever He said, the only thing we lack is various and sundry opportunities to test the
veracity of what God said. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jas 1:2-3).

Aye, that’s why we are still here. Our Heavenly Father is still perfecting us. “Till we all come in the
unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of
the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Be patient, He is making us perfect. “But let
patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jas 1:4).

Only days before our LORD’s crucifixion, He instructed His disciples on the Mount of Olives
concerning His Second Coming (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13:1-37, and Luk 21:1-38). What Jesus
said about the Ten Virgins in Mat 25:1-46, is what we need to study and understand to properly
prepare us for the First “Come Up Hither” (Rev 4:1), which is the Pre-Tribulational Rapture.

“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” (Mat 25:1-13).

“Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins” (Mat 25:1). Virginitly is a sign of purity. “For I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2Co 11:2). “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Rev 14:4). These ten virgins represent the body of the Church. Certainly, they all profess to know the LORD Jesus as their personal Saviour. Further, they have all experienced true Christian salvation. They “tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost” (Heb 6:4).

“Which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom” (Mat 25:1). A lamp indicates the capacity to give off light. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa 119:105). The LORD Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom. John the Baptist called Jesus the Bridegroom.

“He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled” (John 3:29). Who is the Bride of Christ? “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev 21:9). What did the angel show the Apostle John? “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Rev 21:10). Is the Lamb of God to be married to a city? No, Jesus will be married to what the city represents-- His people. Israel’s Twelve Tribes will be represented by the City’s twelve gates. “And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Rev 21:12). The Old Testament Saints are identified with Israel, just as the New Testament Saints are identified with the Church. Abraham looked for the New Jerusalem. “For he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10). The Church will be represented by the City’s twelve foundations-- one for each Apostle. “And the wall of the City had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb” (Rev 21:14). Both Israel and the Church are the Bride of Christ.

What is the most important aspect of this Post-Millennial, New Heavens and New Earth Temple? God is the Temple in the New Jerusalem. “And I saw no temple therein: for the LORD God

Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it" (Rev 21:22). Remember when Jesus made the statement about destroying "this temple" and He would raise it up in three days? He really meant it, when He said that He was the Temple. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). God will light up the City with His Own Glory. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the Glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof" (Rev 21:23).

"And **■**ve of them were wise, and **■**ve were foolish" (Mat 25:2). One cannot be wise without the salvation offered only through Jesus Christ. The Wise Virgins are the Church, who walk according to the Word. "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 3:15). Foolishness is always the denial of God. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa 14:1). The lost and the backslidden deny God by word or action. The Foolish Virgins are the Backslidden Church. They walk as if there was no God who watched or cared.

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no Oil with them" (Mat 25:3). Of what use is a lamp without fuel? "Then Samuel took the horn of Oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward" (1Sa 16:13). Oil represents the Holy Spirit. "And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (Acts 5:32). God's grace, not our obedience, merits the Holy Spirit; but our obedience is necessary for the abiding of the Holy Spirit. "Quench not [literally, extinguish not] the Spirit" (1Th 5:19). Make no mistake, foolishness-- as used in this context-- is not accidental, but purposely unconcerned about obedience. Foolishness, so represented, is sin. "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Pro 24:9).

"But the wise took Oil in their vessels with their lamps" (Mat 25:4). The truly wise cannot be impressed by the multiplication of words, thoughts, or actions devoid of the Word of God. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Pro 1:7). The Word of Truth is the lamp of the Wise Virgins. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa 119:105). The Godly understand the treasure that the Word of God is-complete with Its Indwelling Author and Illuminator. "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

"While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Mat 25:5). How long will our Heavenly Bridegroom tarry? Not long, because He promised, "I come quickly" (Rev 22:7, Rev 22:12). Is this sin that the Wise slumber and sleep as do the Foolish Virgins? No. "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psa 103:14). He provides appropriate rest to His loved ones.

"He giveth His beloved sleep" (Psa 127:2). On the other hand, the Foolish Virgins sleep the sleep of those who are at home in the world. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?" (Pro 6:9).

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Mat 25:6). Will the Pre-Tribulational Rapture occur at midnight? It will have to be midnight for someone in the world-- probably Israel. When the LORD Jesus comes for His Bride, a command will be given, "Go ye out to meet Him" (Mat 25:6). Likewise, our beloved brother John records a

similar command, "Come up hither" (Rev 4:1).

"Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps" (Mat 25:7). Both the Wise and the Foolish Virgins know about the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. The Foolish Virgins have argued that their life of sacrifice is more important than someone's opinion of walking in obedience. The LORD's response is unequivocal. "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1Sa 15:22). The Wise Virgins not only render heart obedience, but further seek how to please their LORD. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His Commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1Jn 3:22). The Wise Virgins, like Mary, the sister of Lazarus, will be summoned by the Heavenly Bridegroom. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee" (John 11:28).

Only the truly obedient will render unimpaired compliance to the Rapture Command, while the Foolish will characteristically yield a form of obedience, but will lack "the power thereof" (2Ti 3:5).

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your Oil; for our lamps are gone out" (Mat 25:8).

If the Foolish Virgins knew about the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, why did they not have the required Oil for their lamps? "Wherefore the LORD said, Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men" (Isa 29:13). The Foolish Virgins did not possess the Oil for their lamps because they were not, at heart, willing to prepare for it. "And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Eze 33:31). A backslider is a Foolish Virgin because he is unstably "double minded". "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (Jas 1:8). Our LORD explained how unstable the ground is upon which the backslider is attempting to stand. "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luk 16:13). The backslider at heart knows that the LORD Jesus is coming to take the Church to Heaven at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, but he chooses to gratify selfish desires rather than obediently watch and prepare. This is classic self-deception. "But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas 1:22).

What then is a backslider? "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Pro 14:14). When a Christian sins, it is as though we crucify again the LORD Jesus. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the Good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify [literally, are crucifying] to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [literally, putting] Him to an open shame" (Heb 6:4-6). What? Is it impossible for a backslider to repent? "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luk 18:27). It is impossible for God to forgive the backslider--"renew them again unto repentance" (Heb 6:6)-- while they are STILL crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame. The wonder is not that the Loving Father will not forgive an impenitent backslider, but that a Christian would deny "the LORD that bought them" (2Pe 2:1). Are we all doomed to return to our sinning? "For if after they have escaped the

pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the True Proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2Pe 2:20-22). "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly" (Pro 26:11). Is the Pre-Tribulational Rapture only a blissful dream for the fortunate few who may be accidentally holy at the right moment? "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom 6:2). It is unthinkable that God Only Wise (Rom 16:27) could not provide His people with anything more than an accidental holiness. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Co 15:57). Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1Jn 5:4).

How do you prevent Wise Virgins from becoming Foolish Virgins? God is our Keeper. "The LORD is my Shepherd" (Psa 23:1). As the Good Shepherd, He has promised to keep us at the hazard of giving His Own Life. "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He has vouched our safety even to entering the Eternal Dwelling of Heaven. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:27-28).

Isn't our LORD's statement, "Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28), a promise? Yes, Praise God, it is an exceedingly great and precious promise! A promise assumes the veracity and ability of the one who makes the promise to keep it. "For when God made Promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself" (Heb 6:13). A promise assumes the willingness of the receiver of the promise to fulfill its conditions. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa 1:19-20).

God has not only designed His Promises to prepare us for the Pre-Tribulational Rapture, but more importantly, to make us like His Only Begotten Son. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4). How wise God is to make such provision!

"According as His Divine Power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2Pe 1:3). He is doing all that can wisely be done to compel us to enter in ourselves as well as to fill His House at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "And the LORD said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled" (Luk 14:23).

"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" (Mat 25:9). Wisdom dictates that we give only when we have the ability to give. "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it" (Pro 3:27). The Wise Virgins' refusal to give of their Oil to the Foolish, was not unloving hardness. But as Jesus said when refusing a request by James and John: "But to sit on

My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared" (Mark 10:40). He did not give what was not His to give; likewise the Wise Virgins.

"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" (Mat 25:10). Unprepared describes the Foolish Virgins.

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye [the unprepared who would later read Jesus'

Words] think not the Son of man cometh" (Mat 24:44). What victory the Devil must anticipate in aiding a Backslidden Laodicean Church from leaving at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture with the Wise Virgins! "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!" (Luk 17:1).

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us" (Mat 25:11). The LORD Jesus Christ has often heard His people call Him LORD, but the very meaning of the title LORD implies submission and obedience to His Word. "And why call ye Me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?" (Luk 6:46).

"But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not" (Mat 25:12). How can the LORD Jesus tell the Backslidden Church, the Foolish Virgins, "I know you not"? Actually, it is quite easy. The knowledge of our salvation is not based upon an intellectual remembrance of any event, or chain of events, that led to our profession of Jesus Christ as our LORD and Saviour. When it comes down to it, only the testimony of the Holy Spirit counts. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6). But, how does the Blessed Spirit testify that sonship to us? Through the Word of God that He inspired. "For the Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2Pe 1:21). The Holy Spirit gives us definite assurance of our salvation through His Word. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1Jn 4:13).

But, how could God tell a backslider that He knows them not? Because knowledge of our sonship is as distinct of an exercise as the New Birth. The Apostle John was instructed to write an entire epistle to make clear the subject of how we can know that we are a Christian. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1Jn 5:13). Here's the key. Only those who are presently walking can have present knowledge of their salvation. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments" (1Jn 2:3). Those who are not walking in obedience cannot have a present knowledge of their sonship. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1Jn 2:4). The backslider, or the Foolish Virgin, may intellectually remember his salvation experience, but the Holy Spirit is no longer giving him the comfort of the Divine Testimony. In fact, God is totally justified in terrifying the impenitent backslider with certain destruction. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb 10:26-27). Is this inconsistent behavior on the part of God? No. If they repent, they demonstrate that they did possess the salvation from which they had fallen away-- and now

returned.

If they never do repent, then they are not Foolish Virgins, they are wolves in sheep's clothing, "whose damnation is just" (Rom 3:8). "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Mat 7:15).

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Mat 25:13). The disciples were not privileged to know, then, what the Spirit has revealed, now, to the Church. "And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (Rev 22:10). We have too many signs that the original disciples did not have to indicate the exact nearness of the soon coming of the LORD Jesus Christ for His Church at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. "Can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Mat 16:3). On May 14, 1948 Israel was back in the land. On June 7, 1967 Israel recaptured Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Both of these events are signs (Mat 24:15 and Luk 21:24 b) that we are in the Last Generation. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for Your Redemption draweth nigh" (Luk 21:28).

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