

# Sleeping at Midnight

In this article we're going to be studying the parable of the ten virgins. We will be reading a couple of statements from our prophet first, and then we're going to get into the passage in Matthew. Our first statement is found in the *Review and Herald*, August 19, 1890:

"When the third angel's message is preached as it should be, power attends its proclamation and it becomes an abiding influence."

Are we preaching the third angel's message the way God designed for it to be preached? Continue:

"It must be attended with divine power or it will accomplish nothing. I am often referred to the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom were wise and five foolish."

Now if the servant of the Lord was often referred to this parable, it must be important! Continuing:

"This parable has been and will be fulfilled to the very letter; for it has a special application to this time and, like the third angel's message, has been fulfilled and will continue to be present truth until the close of time."

This parable is present truth. It was fulfilled to the very letter through the Millerite movement in the 1840s, and it has continued to be fulfilled through the Second Advent Movement since 1844. It's connected to the third angel's message and is also present truth for our time until the close of time. Here is a brief statement about present truth in *Early Writings*, page 63.1:

"There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is 'present truth' that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause."

Friends, in Seventh-day Adventist churches, we should be hearing Seventh-day Adventist messages. You can go to lots of other churches that have well-meaning people who are actually preaching Bible-based messages. And, in some cases, some of our brothers and sisters in the other churches are taking clearer stands on some of the social issues of today than our Adventist brothers and sisters are willing to take; but, though these messages are relevant, we need to be preaching Adventist messages in Adventist churches.

Our prophet goes on to tell us, in *Early Writings*, 63, what present truth is:

"But such subjects as the Sanctuary, in con-

nection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell."

I ask the question, What are we doing as Seventh-day Adventists? Do we think we can do better than the prescription that God has given to us? Since the parable of the ten virgins is present truth, this is something that is worth our time and study.

What is the setting of this parable of the ten virgins? It immediately follows Matthew, chapter 24, when the disciples came to Jesus. As they were walking out of Jerusalem, they saw the temple and remarked on the glory and the beauty of it; and Jesus just happened to say, "I tell you that there will not be one stone left upon another." In the minds of the disciples, this statement was synonymous with the end of the world. So Jesus, in His mercy, mixed the destruction of Jerusalem with the end of the world. He talked about a variety of signs: wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, and plagues in various places. Jesus said these are the beginning of sorrows, but the end is not yet. Then He described what will be a sign of the end: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." After mentioning these signs, He told two parables: the first parable illustrated the nearness of the destruction of the temple and the second parable illustrated the time of the end of the world, giving specific warnings against being an evil servant. This then led into the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25. The parable of the wise and the evil servants is the perfect shift into the parable of the ten virgins. In the parable of the wise and evil servants, we see two classes of people in God's Church. Through the parable of the ten virgins, we discover that there are actually three classes in the church.

In Matthew, chapter 24, starting in verse 44, Jesus says:

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

In other words, we don't know the hour that Jesus is coming; so we better be ready. This was spoken with the authority of Jesus Himself. And then He got into a description of what His church will be like before He comes back. In verse 45, He says:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom

his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?"

The Scriptures say here that, while we are waiting for Jesus to come, He will have faithful and wise servants whom He has made rulers in His house (in His church), to give His people meat in due season. This means that God's servants will have spiritual food that is appropriate for the time that they are living in. It's simply another way to describe "present truth." Jesus says in Matthew 24:45:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?"

There are some in the church who say that Christ is the only head of the church. If Christ is the only head of the church, why did He appoint rulers over His household? There is order in His church. And He says that His rulers, His wise servants, will be giving meat, which is present truth, in due season. They will realize the times in which we are living in and they will be giving the trumpet a certain sound. They will be sounding the alarm to the world and pointing the church to the righteousness of Christ that we must have before Jesus returns. Meat in due season, this is what God's servants should be sharing; these messages are designed to prepare God's church and the world for the coming of Jesus. Jesus says in verses 46-47:

"Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods."

Faithful servants are not the only class in the church at the return of Jesus. We might think or hope that all Seventh-day Adventists are eagerly looking for the coming of Jesus, that they are encouraging the preaching of the coming of Jesus and working toward the coming of Jesus. We are told otherwise; there is another group of servants in the church. Verse 48:

"But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth His coming."

These are Adventists because they acknowledge that Jesus is coming; they just say that His coming is delayed. They don't go so far as to say, "I don't think Jesus is coming at all." They're just saying, "I don't see Him coming anytime soon." Now what would cause these evil servants to say that the coming of Jesus is delayed? Look how long we have been waiting! Verse 49:

"And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken."

Notice what happens: When the evil servant says in his heart, "my Lord delayeth His coming," he begins to smite his fellow servants. Who are the fellow servants? The wise servants who are giving meat in due season by saying,

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."—Matthew 24:44.

The evil servants say, "Put down the trumpet, and don't let it sound. I'm tired of hearing messages about the coming of Jesus in our church." Because they are under the influence of the wine of Babylon, they are eating and drinking with the drunken. Whoever is drinking the wine of Babylon by accepting Babylonian theology better be careful because Babylonians aren't interested in the end of the world. They are generally not interested in the coming of Jesus.

When someone drinks the wine of Babylon, they start to develop a distaste for present truth. This causes them to persecute the servants who give present truth. While the wise servants are looking for the coming of Jesus, the evil servants are saying in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming." In verses 50 and 51, We see what happens to the evil servants who don't want Jesus to return:

"The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Some may respond by saying, "Praise the Lord, I'm not an evil servant," and that's good. Someone may be saying, "I want Jesus to come. I appreciate good messages. I like to hear when the preacher talks about the soon coming of Jesus. That's my kind of message. That's my kind of preaching. I must be a wise servant." Well, if we move on to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, we will see three classes of people. There are wise servants who are also known as wise virgins; there's the evil servants who are drunk with the wine of Babylon; and there are foolish virgins. So there are actually three classes of believers in Adventism before Jesus comes back. The wise servants are also the wise virgins. But just because we believe in the coming of Jesus does not necessarily mean that we are wise. How do we know we aren't foolish virgins? We can visibly see wise servants and evil servants, but you can't necessarily tell the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins.

It is obvious, in the church today, that there are those who are preaching the message of the coming of Jesus; and that gives them the potential to be wise. There are others in the church who are writing in books, magazines, and websites and saying, "We need to stop preaching about the coming of Jesus. It's lost its relevance. Our evangelism doesn't work. We need to do culturally friendly messages that will bring people into the church that don't talk about the Spirit of Prophecy and our end-time prophetic message. Let's just make it seeker sensitive." And we can say, Okay, these are those who don't like the coming of Jesus; they could be evil servants. But just because we believe in the coming of Jesus, just because we appreciate the preaching of truth, does

not automatically mean that we are ready to meet Jesus when He comes. This is why the Bible has the parable of the ten virgins; and the reason this parable carries so much weight is because Jesus gave it to describe the condition of His church at the time of His coming. This parable has great authority. All of Scripture has great authority. It's just very important when Jesus Himself says something in Scripture.

Moving on to the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1:

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

This is a nice verse. If all we had was verse one, we would say that this is a church that is ready. This is a church that is like ten virgins. In the Bible, a virgin is a pure woman; so we see this is a pure church. Not only that, Jesus says they took their lamps. So it's not only that it is a pure church; they take their lamps. Psalm 119:105:

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

This pure church is a Bible-believing church. So the group that will be ready for Jesus are both pure and Bible-believing. They are God's people who believe in the truths of Scripture. They're not confused about the account of creation in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. They're not confused about the Sanctuary message in Daniel 8:14. They're not confused about a variety of other issues in the church. These are people who live by the Bible and the Bible only, who demand a "thus saith the Lord" for every rule and practice of their faith. They are a pure church. They are a Bible-believing church. And it says that they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. This is a group of people who are studying the Bible, focusing on the time they are living in. Through their commitment to purity and their deep study of the truths found in Scripture, they realize that they are living in the time when Jesus is about to return. With this understanding, they go forward, ready to meet the Bridegroom. Friends, these must be Seventh-day Adventists. They are pure. They believe in the Bible; and, based on what the Bible says, they believe everything that the Bible says. They understand the prophetic message; they understand the prophetic time; they understand that this is the time of the coming of Jesus. And, if we just stopped at verse one, we would say that "this church is an on-fire church, and all are going out to meet Jesus when He comes. These must be the wise servants that Jesus was talking about in the previous parable." As we read verse two, we discover that five of the virgins were wise, and five were foolish. Wait a minute! We can be pure? We can believe the truths of Scripture? We can understand that Jesus

is coming soon and still be foolish and left outside of the kingdom of God? That's what Jesus says. This should be a startling wake-up call to anybody who says, "I believe the present truth; therefore, I'm ready for Jesus to come." Jesus is clearly teaching that a mere assent to intellectual truth will not be enough to save us in God's kingdom.

What is the problem with the foolish virgins? Matthew 25:3 says, they were foolish because they took their lamps, but took no oil with them. Now we understand, from Zechariah 4:1-6, that Zerubbabel saw two olive trees with pipes coming out of the olive trees, which flowed olive oil into a bowl; and he looked at this and said to the angel, What does this mean? Then the angel, in verse 6, said, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The oil represents the Holy Spirit. So what's the problem with the foolish virgins? They understand all the truths of Scripture, but they don't have the Holy Spirit in their lives. In *5 Testimonies*, 214, in the chapter on the seal of God, Ellen White says:

"There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith."

Do you know what a foolish virgin is like? This is someone who has the knowledge of the truth; and they have the Word of God, but they don't have the oil of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They have the truths of Scripture; they know what the Bible says; and they use their lamps, but the lamps turn into a weapon because it's not connected with the softening grace of the Holy Spirit. They have no love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. So, if we take the Bible and it turns into a weapon, and we are beating people over the head and saying, "Don't you know the Bible says this? Don't you know the Bible says that?" And it's done in a hateful spirit, we are foolish virgins. Naturally, people wonder, "What happened to this person?" On the other hand, there's others who say, "I'm tired of the boundary of this lamp, and the people that I meet who live within the boundary of this lamp don't have the oil of the Holy Spirit. They're so unkind and are not nice. I don't want that lamp, I just want the oil." But listen, if we have oil without the boundary of the lamp, that oil is going to get everywhere; you're going to get messy, and that's what we have with the Charismatic Movement and the drums in the church, etc. It's not the Holy Spirit, it's an evil spirit. So just because we run into foolish virgins does not give us license to throw the

4 lamp away, because the Holy Spirit guides us into all truth, which that lamp, the Bible, defines.

The foolish virgins use the Bible, and perhaps the Spirit of Prophecy, as a weapon because they lack the grace of the Holy Spirit in their lives. In fact, Ellen White says, in the *Review and Herald, August 19, 1890*, that the state of the church represented by the foolish virgins is also spoken of as the Laodicean state. The bad news is that we have foolish virgins who are Laodicean in our midst; but the good news is that not everybody in Adventism is foolish or lukewarm. There are wise virgins in Adventism today. So the foolish virgins are the Laodiceans who are described as being wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; but they think they're rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. They think they're on their way to heaven and don't need anything else. They think that a knowledge of the Bible will get them into the kingdom. They're going to be the ones saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in Your name? Have we not prophesied in Your name?" These could be preachers who've been preaching the Word. A knowledge of Truth alone does not give evidence that someone is converted. But if someone is a converted person, they will follow the truth as it is in Jesus.

If you want to do a good study on the parable of the ten virgins, the last chapter in *Christ's Object Lessons* goes through all of it; but one can also read the entire *Review and Herald, August 19, 1890*, article. These complementary selections go very well together.

Continuing the subject of the foolish virgins: In the parable of the virgins, five are represented as wise and five as foolish as shown in Matthew 25:2.

"The name, 'foolish virgins,' represents the character of those who have not the genuine heart-work wrought by the Spirit of God. The coming of Christ does not change the foolish virgins into wise ones. When Christ comes, the balances of heaven will weigh the character and decide whether it is pure, sanctified, and holy, or whether it is unclean and unfit for the kingdom of heaven. Those who have despised the divine grace that is at their command, that would have qualified them to be the inhabitants of heaven, will be the foolish virgins. They had all the light, all the knowledge, but they failed to obtain the oil of grace. They did not receive the truth in its sanctifying power."—*Review and Herald, August 19, 1890*.

Now, this next statement is the last statement that will be presented here on the foolish virgins. It should be a startling statement to all of us. Notice the evil servants are not described as hypocrites. Notice what Ellen White says about the foolish virgins. This is in *Christ Object Lessons, page 411*: "The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites." Wow. If we are a foolish virgin, we're not a hypocrite. Continuing: "They have a regard for the truth. They have advocated the truth. They are attracted to those who believe the truth." In other words, foolish virgins love the truth, the Three Angels' Messages and all that it entails. They could advocate the truth, meaning they are a preacher of truth. They could be attracted to those who believe the truth, meaning they like to go to conventions where they can hear the truth preached. Yet, despite all this, they are foolish. Why? It is because "they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature[s] to be broken up" (*Christ's Object Lessons, 411*).

In other words, they are not surrendered, not submitted, and not converted. If the old nature is still alive and well in your life, you can show up on Sabbath morning and give the Sabbath school lesson and even preach the sermon, do special music, and yet still be a mean, grumpy old grouch that nobody wants to be around. That's a foolish virgin. The excuse could be made: "Lord, I know the truth; I know I'm not very nice, but at least I'm defending the truth in my unchristian spirit. Surely that counts for something." Yet Christ would respond: "No it doesn't. If you have not fallen upon Me and permitted the old nature to be broken up, you are a foolish virgin."

The foolish virgins need the experience of being crucified with Christ, fully and totally surrendered. Thankfully, there are wise virgins in the church who have done this. Matthew chapter 25, verse 4 shows the difference. And we read:

"The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

We understand that the oil represents the Holy Spirit. We understand that the lamp represents the Bible. So these are people in the church who not only understand the truth as it is in Jesus; they're clear on the creation account; they're clear on the Sanctuary message; they're clear on righteousness by faith; they're clear on the Three Angels' Messages; and they are converted. That's the kind of Christian person we all want to be. Let's turn our attention to where

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the oil was stored. "They took oil in their vessels." So what are their vessels? The vessels obviously are not the lamps. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 4:6-9. This may be a familiar passage to some. In connection to this parable, it will be seen in a way that it hasn't been seen before. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure" in what? "earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." Now notice verse 10: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest." Where? "in our body." The earthen vessel is the life that God has given to us, the heart and the mind that we have. And in that heart and mind that we have, we are to be bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus.

In other words, we are crucified with Christ, so that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in us. A wise virgin has the life of Jesus shining forth from within. A wise virgin has, in the earthen vessel, Jesus living in their heart. I want Jesus to be in my earthen vessel. I want God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, to shine in my heart; so that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as seen in the face of Jesus Christ, will be seen in my life. Is this your experience? Now listen, you may not feel it because the closer you come to Jesus, the more sinful you will appear in your own eyes. Yet you can have that experience by the grace of God. You can bear about in your body the dying of the Lord Jesus. So when you are troubled on every side, you will not be distressed. When you are perplexed, you will not be in despair. When persecuted, you will not be forsaken. When you are cast down, you will not be destroyed. There are too many Adventists who, under trial, demonstrate that, rather than being fine gold when tried in the fire, they are a base metal who, when they are troubled on every side, give up their hope in Christ. And we murmur and complain like the children of Israel, and we say, "Man, if we had been alive during their time, we wouldn't have complained the way they did." And yet God has given more light to our church than He did even to the children of Israel, and some of us complain just as

badly as they did. The wise virgins will not be that way because, when we have Jesus in our hearts, we won't be complaining; we will have the joy of the Lord in our hearts.

Now you would think that, if we stopped right there and you were to tell me that there will be those in the church who are sleeping, I would say, "Yeah, the foolish virgins are sleeping, and the wise are wide awake." But let's keep reading Matthew chapter 25, verse 5: "While the Bridegroom tarried [slow in some action], they all slumbered and slept." The wise and the foolish virgins are sleeping. Here's the interesting thing: The fact that the church is asleep does not necessarily mean that you are lost because the wise virgins will be ready when the time comes. It's not commendable to be sleeping; but it doesn't mean that you will be lost, because the wise and the foolish are sleeping at that time.

Why is everybody asleep? Because it's been a lot longer than anybody expected for Jesus to come. Jesus went into the most holy place of the heavenly Sanctuary on October 22, 1844; and yet here we are more than 150 years later. Anyone who grew up a Seventh-day Adventist has heard their whole life that Jesus is coming soon. And Jesus still hasn't come. And so everybody, spiritually speaking, has actually fallen asleep; the pure church, the Bible-believing church, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, the wise and the foolish, all who are pure, Bible-believing Seventh-day Adventists are sleeping. We may be looking for the coming of Jesus, but we're doing so through a sleepy prophetic eye.

You see, there's some key events that have to take place before Jesus comes back. We understand that there's going to be a national Sunday law that will coincide with the outpouring of the latter rain and the giving of the loud cry, which will lead to the close of probation, which will then lead to Jacob's time of trouble. None of those things have happened yet. And, if you hear some stray comments, from people here or there, that we've entered into the judgment of the living, don't fall for that kind of thing. We are still waiting for the final events of Earth's history to kick in.

We are in the time when it could happen; because once Jesus went into the most holy place in 1844, the potential for those things to happen is there, but they haven't happened yet. Every year that goes by, the delay gets longer and people are sleeping

6 very well. But, the parable doesn't stop there. The church does not stay asleep forever. A day is coming when the church is going to be wide awake. Look at Matthew 25, verse 6. If you're sound asleep at midnight, that is going to be the deepest part of your sleep. So when the church is in its deepest state of spiritual sleep at midnight, there is a cry to be made: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." The midnight cry wakes up all ten virgins. Everybody will be sleeping, but they will wake up and not sleep anymore.

Now the midnight cry that prophetically wakes up the church coincides with Revelation 18:1, which is the loud cry, when "an angel comes down from heaven, having great power" or authority, "and the earth is lightened or illuminated with his glory." Verse 2:

"And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

And verse 3 says:

"For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies."

Now notice verse 4; it says:

"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, Come out of her My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

Verse 5:

"For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

Now look again at the first 5 verses; this is the loud cry message; and in that message is the pronouncement that Babylon is fallen because her sins have reached unto heaven.

*Last Day Events, page 198*, tells us more about this. When do her sins reach unto heaven? "When the law of God is finally made void by legislation." Guess what, friends? Do you want to know what triggers the midnight cry of this parable? It's the National Sunday law. And let me tell you something: When the National Sunday law comes, there is not a Seventh-day Adventist alive who is going to stay sleeping at that moment. Every single Seventh-day Adventist will know, when the Sunday law comes, that Jesus is at the door, that the delay is over. Jesus is coming again; and so those who are wise, those who have the oil in their vessels with their lamps, are now prepared to receive the outpouring of the latter rain so that they will give the loud cry message while the foolish virgins didn't even have the early rain experience, and they're not ready to do anything

other than to realize that they're not ready for Jesus to come. And this, the way the parable describes this moment, comes unexpectedly.

Let me put it to you this way: I believe that Jesus is coming soon, But I have made plans for this week, and even next month. I am sure you have as well. We are to occupy till Christ comes. But we, as a people, need to check our hearts so that we're ready when He comes. What if something happened on Tuesday of this coming week... (disclaimer: I'm not making a prediction. No man knows the day or the hour.) But if something happened on Tuesday of this coming week, or even next month, that was of such a momentous magnitude that the people of this nation—let me back up. We are told, in inspiration, that it's not going to be a behind the scenes conspiracy where all of a sudden, voilà, the President says, I've got a Sunday law for you. No, there's something that happens that will cause the people of the nation to make demands of the legislators, saying, "We need to get back to God. We've strayed so far to the left; and we, as a nation, are asking for legislation that legislates the immorality of gay marriage. Look at us as a nation. Look at the judgments that are being poured out upon us. It is time for us to come back to God. We need a law to get us right with God."

Now here's the amazing thing about the Sunday law and what leads up to it: There are many good people in the Christian church; but some of these churches are the fallen churches of Babylon and the evangelical churches, and we have a message to call them out, but the organized bodies of those churches have a false gospel that says Jesus will save you in your sins. And with that gospel, there are some who are intelligent enough to say, "Well, if I'm saved in my sins, why does it matter what I do?" And so we, as a nation, have declined because of this false gospel. Because our gospel doesn't have the power to keep us from living an unholy life, we get worse and worse and worse and worse, and we've reached a point of degeneracy that eventually it will be like, "Wow, we're so bad"; and so the Christian churches, Protestant America, the second beast of Revelation 13, will come to the halls of legislation and say, "Hey, as a Christian church, we need your help, legislators, because our gospel doesn't work." So we need you to make a law to help people follow God; because our gospel isn't powerful enough to do that." And, as Adventists, we have been given the everlasting gospel that would actually keep this nation from getting into where it has been, but we prophetically see where things are going. This is the bottom line: When that Sunday law comes, if it were to happen in the next few weeks, humanly speaking, I would go from a state of being sleeping at midnight to wide awake. All of a sudden, everything has changed.

If you are honest with yourself, and you're doing

7 God's work, you know you have a plan of what you're going to be doing during the next few months. And I almost can guarantee you that, in your plan for life, the next few months is not the close of probation or the Sunday law. If that were to happen, it would change everything. Now again, I'm not saying the national Sunday law is going to happen in the next few months. But the point of this parable, in Matthew 25, is that it is going to happen in a startling and an unexpected way that it wakes up a church that has been sleeping at midnight.

There's going to be an overwhelming surprise. According to *Prophets in Kings, 626*:

"Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise. In this preparation they should make by diligently studying the Word of God and striving to conform their lives to its precepts. The tremendous issues of eternity demand of us something besides an imaginary religion, a religion of words and forms, where truth is kept in the outer court. God calls for a revival and reformation."

That imaginary religion is the religion of the foolish virgins; they know the words and the forms, the present truth and all of that, but they haven't let Jesus come into their lives and change them. We should be preparing for this overwhelming surprise. *Testimonies, Volume 8, page 28*, says the same thing:

"Transgression has almost reached its limit. Confusion fills the world and a great terror is soon to come upon human beings. The end is very near. We who know the truth should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise."

*Testimonies, Volume 9, page 11*:

"The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones."

This overwhelming surprise, the Midnight Cry, which coincides with the Sunday law, reveals the character of the virgins. And, at that point, who you are is who you will be. Notice *Christ's Object Lessons, page 412*: "It is in a crisis that character is revealed."

I'm not going to read the rest of the statement. I'm going to stop right there and say this: It's not hard to be a good Christian when things are going well. You're receiving blessings, people are being nice to you. You can be nice too, hopefully. And so, when everything is going well, you may feel like you have a good character. But the question is: What is your character like when it is tested? Because it is in a crisis that character is revealed. And the crisis that

God allows you to go through now is the preparation for the final crisis, when the cry goes out: "Here is the Sunday law; that means Jesus is coming. Go forth to meet the Bridegroom," and you know you are standing face to face with eternity.

That will be the greatest crisis of your life; and, if you love Jesus and long for His appearing, it will also be the greatest moment. "When the earnest voice is proclaimed at midnight, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,' the sleeping virgins will be roused from their slumbers, and it will be seen who had made preparation for the event." Both parties were taken unaware. Even the converted were taken by surprise. But one group was prepared for the emergency and the other was found without preparation. Now notice this next sentence: "So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God" (*Christ's Object Lessons, 412*).

You know, you can say you have faith in the promises of God now, but what's it going to be like when that time comes? If you're struggling to believe in the promises of God now, there's no way you're going to be sustained by grace then.

"It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied."—*Christ's Object Lessons, 412*.

So this obviously creates a reaction among the virgins. You're going to have this moment of reality when your character is revealed. And so all the virgins wake up. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, including the foolish. (See Matthew 25:7-10). They were all like, "Oh, Jesus is coming; we better move forward to meet Him." And the foolish said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." When this happens it is going to be a significant time, but the virgins have Jesus in their lives; and so they have the strength that they need to go forth to meet this crisis. And the foolish virgins are going to see the wise and realize, "Oh, they're ready for this. They're not falling apart. They're not scared to death. They're actually happy for this, and they're going out to give the message. Why is it that I'm so scared to death of this whole thing? Why am I falling apart? Why am I feeling like I'm going to collapse here? Hey, what are you doing? How do you have such an experience to be ready for this moment? What are you doing?" Guess what? You can't get from the wise, at that moment, what they have. At that moment, you're not going to be able to call up the president of Uchee Pines, or Brother Lemon, or Brother Fiedler, or someone else that you

8 have looked up to and connected with, maybe they've even been a prayer partner for you. At that time, your character is your character and their character is their character. The wise answered, saying, "Not so, lest there not be enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves." Character is not transferable. Notice this:

"No man can believe for another, no man can receive the Spirit for another, no man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, 412.

And so the foolish go out to try to find the Holy Spirit; and, while they are going to buy the oil, the Bridegroom comes. This is the close of probation. And those who are ready will go in with Him to the marriage, and the door is shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But he answers in Matthew 25:12, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." 1 John 4, verse 8 says:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

He is saying, "I don't know you because you never loved Me. You didn't have a relationship with Me. You didn't spend time with Me. You knew about Me. You knew what the Bible said about Me. You knew the manner of My coming, but you didn't take the time to get to know Me.

You were waking up late in the morning and not having devotions. You weren't spending time with God throughout the day. You weren't meditating on His Word at night. You were so busy with the cares of this world and even doing good things, that you forgot to spend time with Jesus; so He didn't even know you at the time of His coming.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."—Matthew 25:13.

It is a perilous state to be in to say, "Since Jesus hasn't come yet, I have more time to just keep doing the things that I'm doing. I'll come to church every Sabbath, and I'll even do God's work, but I know my heart's unconverted. It's easier to just stay the way things are than to actually do a full surrender."

Friends, you better watch out because someday, possibly very soon, there's going to be the cry that

goes out, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him." And, at that moment, God will have His people that are ready; but, if you haven't surrendered your life to Him, you won't be ready. Now is the time to prepare. Now is the time to have our hearts right and ready to meet Jesus. Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, "Behold your God." This is the "loud cry message":

"The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of His character of love."—*Christ Object Lessons*, page 415.

But you can't be that revelation of His character of love if you don't have Christ' Character in you.

"The children of God are to manifest His glory in their own life and character. They are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them."—*Last Day Events*, 200.

So as I bring this to a close, I have a question for you: Who are you? You know you can put on a good front. Everybody can look wise. And I pray that there aren't any evil servants among our readers. If you are one, you still have time to repent and join the Second Advent Movement. But I know that there's at least some foolish virgins. You know the truth; you believe the truth; you may be advocating the truth; you are attracted to those who believe the truth; but you have not fallen upon the rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted your old nature to be broken up.

When that line is crossed, then that old nature rises right up, and you're showing your fallen humanity rather than the beauty of Jesus. But now the Lord and the Holy Spirit are moving to do everything possible, that they can, to give each one of us an opportunity to be right with God before Jesus comes. So take courage, my friend, because it's not too late to give your life fully and completely to Jesus and be a wise virgin.

*For a finished work*



**Jonathan Taylor**

*Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35*

*More Food for the Little Flock —*