

Matthew 25:1-13 Great and Holy Tuesday

Before the Messianic Wedding Banquet of yesterday, today that which goes before.

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins

25 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom ^[a]is coming; go out to meet him!' ⁷Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. ¹¹"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹²But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

¹³"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour ^[b]in which the Son of Man is coming.

Commentary from the Fathers

Matthew 25:12–13 "I Do Not Know You" - St Cyril of Alexandria:

Jesus compares the rulers of the people with virgins. The person who discharges a sacred function must be undefiled in soul and body, just as Paul says, "that she might be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit." For it is customary for the Scripture to divide the present age into five seasons or times.⁴⁹ It assigns to each time both God-fearing and foolish souls, just as each time has wise persons and simpletons, righteous persons and wicked ones. In the parable all the virgins go out with their lamps. Jesus indicates by this that all souls have been illuminated by God through innate and natural laws but also indeed by the laws written by Moses. Now all the virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All were determined to seek favour with God and to join themselves spiritually to the bridegroom. He sows in the hearts of the faithful the seed of every kind of virtue. Indeed, this is why he is called a bridegroom! Nevertheless, some prove to be undistinguished, though they possess an illumination from God.... He mockingly calls their drowsiness the death of the flesh, which by necessity will go before both wise and foolish, whom the

trumpet of the angels awakes at the time of Christ's second coming. For all who have been rendered powerless by death are awakened, the good and the bad, and all are made ready to present their defense before the judge. This is represented in the parable when each virgin trims her lamp, summing up all that has occurred in her life. The thoughtless virgins have brought no oil with them. Their soul begins to grow gloomy and as if snuffed out departs into a delirious state, so as to think they will be shown mercy through the virtue of the others. They are rejected as the other virgins say there is not enough for us and for you. The virtue of each scarcely suffices for the salvation of the soul, because even those who are very wise transgress in many ways.

Weddings in Israel in Antiquity

(eg., with Isaac & Rebekah and Jacob & Rachel and Leah)

There were three stages of a marriage in the Bible: (NOT then celebrated in a synagogue – only in modern period have marriages taken this form in Judaism and Christianity).

a. Part 1: signing the "ketubbah" marriage contract

Legally there was a marriage at this point but more like a legally binding betrothal in the modern sense. The marriage was not sexually consummated. Sometimes, even, therefore, children were pledged to each other for the future completion of the marriage.

b. Part 2: The "chuppah"¹: sexual consummation

Up to 7 years later, when the dowry in the ketubbah contract had been paid by the groom; he notified the bride's father who arranged a date for the sexual consummation of the marriage at the bride's home.

On the assigned day the bride with her virginal maiden friends, and after due preparation, ***kept an attentive vigil until late at night for the arrival of the bridegroom and his friends.***² The couple then retired and made love while their friends rejoiced, usually outside, although in a larger house, sometimes in another room.

¹ Today in Jewish weddings the "chuppah" is merely the canopy under which a couple wed. Originally it referred to the room (sometimes a tent, hence the canopy) in which the marriage was consummated.

² This of course is the context of the Parable of the 10 Virgins which is so essential for understanding its meaning.

Because the bride had to be a virgin, a cloth with the blood of the hymen was presented to witnesses for the parents of the bride, who then gave it back to the bride as testimony of the consummation of the marriage.

c. **Part 3: The wedding feast**

After consummation, husband and wife with their attendants and friends then processed to the groom's house where the wedding feast began and continued, often for a number of days!

The Bride Groom and the Bride in the Scriptures

In the **Old Testament**, negatively, the relationship between Israel and the Lord could be compared to a broken, faithless and disowned marriage.

Read about this in **Hosea 1**. Read also: **The Song of Songs** – a sexual allegory of the union of the soul with God. In the **New Testament**, note the following ...

Ephesians 5:31-32

³¹“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³ ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

2 Corinthians 11:2

²For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.

Revelation 19:7-8

⁷Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” ⁸And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Life Application

“Your lack of planning is not my crisis.”

Be ready, celebrate, be joined as one flesh and one spirit to the Bridegroom in the Church.

To achieve this readiness, we must strive to do the following:

Yearn for God; Be Attentive to Him; Be Ready, Consistent, Patient and full of Hope in Him.

³ Genesis 2:24