

The Parables of the Wedding Feast and of the Wise and Foolish Virgins

Passages: Mt 22:1–14; Mt 25:1–13

Memory Verse

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”
(Matthew 25:13)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Work [Behavior]
1. God sent His Son to the world, but the people rejected Him. As a result, the kingdom of heaven has been opened so all can receive the gift of salvation. 2. Jesus Christ will return at an unknown hour.	1. Jesus Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride of Christ. 2. God is merciful. 3. God is just.	1. Put off the old man and put on the new man. 2. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

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Spiritual Teachings

A. The Parable of the Wedding Feast (Mt 22:1–14)

When Jesus Christ ministered on earth, people would gather from different places to listen to Him speak concerning the kingdom of God. Though He taught using many methods, Jesus Christ most commonly taught about the kingdom of heaven through parables. In previous lessons, we learned about the parables of: the mustard seed; leaven; the hidden treasure; the pearl; the dragnet; the sower; and the wheat and the tares. We need to understand that when we study these parables closely, we can discover rich truths about Jesus and why He came to save us. Most importantly, these parables all teach us the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Let's first turn to Matthew 22:1–14 and read the passage.

Understanding the Parable and Its Spiritual Teachings (BSG: Matthew, 7.7–7.9)¹

Who is the king?	The king is God, the Father.
Who is the son?	The son who is being honored at the feast is Jesus Christ.
What is the purpose of this feast?	Jesus Christ compared the kingdom of heaven to a wedding feast that a king had prepared for his son.
What happened to the servants who called the invitees to attend?	They were ignored, treated spitefully, and even killed by those who did not respect the king's command and invitation.
How did the king respond?	Furious, he sent his armies to destroy the murderers and burn their city.
What did the king do after?	He sent invitations to anyone his servants could find, both bad and good.
What does the wedding garment represent?	Our wedding garment* is the righteousness of Christ (Phil 3:9), which is spotless and perfect. We have to wear it in order to attend the wedding feast. From the beginning, God provided a "covering" for our sin. He "made tunics of skin, and clothed [Adam and Eve]" (Gen 3:7, 21). This required animal sacrifice. In Revelation, we learn of a multitude wearing white robes**, for they "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev 7:9, 14). *The wedding garment can represent baptism, the sacrament for the remission of sins for regeneration. "We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isa 64:6). So, anyone who claims to believe in Christ but refuses to put on Christ through baptism (Gal 3:26–27) is not fit to enter God's kingdom. **Notice that the garments mentioned in Revelation 3:4–5 are "not defiled" and are "white." Thus, we have to make sure that our "garments always be white," fit for a kingly feast (Eccl 9:8).
Why was it such an offense not to wear the wedding garment?	The wedding garment was required attire for all in attendance at the feast. Likewise, God also has His righteous requirements for those who wish to enter His kingdom. Those who seem to accept the gospel but do not live out God's will in their lives are not worthy of God's kingdom. The wedding garment is our holy character. Holiness is always present in those who are guests of the great King, for without holiness, no one shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14).

¹ TJC Department of Literary Ministry, *Bible Study Guide: Matthew*, (Malaysia: True Jesus Church, 2012), http://bsg.tjc.org/tjc_bsg_lesson/matthew-30/, 7.7–7.9.

When the man was speechless in response to the king, what did the king do?	The king commanded his servants to bind the man “hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt 22:13). This refers to an eternity without God.
Why did Jesus end the parable with this statement: “For many are called, but few are chosen”?	The servants called all those they could find to the feast. But only those who accepted the invitation and dressed in wedding garments were chosen.
How was the first invitation different from the second? Who did the two groups of people represent?	The first invitation went to a select group of people, but the second went to all, “both bad and good.” The first group represents the Jewish leaders and people who rejected Jesus, since they had been chosen first. The second group represents everyone who came to accept Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, regardless of their past conduct.
What does this parable teach us? What must we do to enter God’s kingdom?	This parable teaches us how to receive the gospel of salvation. God has prepared the best things for us in abundance. Thus, we should honor and accept God’s gracious gift of salvation by setting aside our own priorities and humbly obeying the gospel. We must receive water baptism for the remission of sins. Then we must put on the righteousness of God and practice God’s will in our lives. God is patient, but there will come a day when it will be too late for those who have rejected His offer of salvation.

Life Application: Let your garments always be white

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless.”

(Mt 22:11–12)

At a wedding full of guests, the king noticed one man who “did not have on a wedding garment.” Wearing proper garments at a wedding is imperative. Why? An invitation to a royal wedding should not be taken lightly. He had been given the rare opportunity to attend, so he should have given due respect for it.

God’s invitation to salvation should not be taken lightly. Jesus Christ is telling us that when we see Him return, it is going to be a glorious event. Let us turn to Revelation 19:6–9.

Here, the Bible reveals exactly what the wedding garment in the parable represents. In the marriage between the Lamb, Jesus Christ, to His bride, the church, the bride put on “fine linen,” defined as “the righteous acts of the saints.” (Rev 19:8). This requires purging our sins through water baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit in order to live righteous lives. To live a righteous life is to live a life of obedience, of godly character, and of good works. Ephesians 4:20–24 uses the example of clothing to teach us what we should “put off” and “put on.”

Examine yourself. What do you need to “put off” to keep your garment “clean”? *(Allow students to share.)* Ecclesiastes 9:8 says, “Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil.” Since we have been called to God’s salvation, we must keep our garment clean for when we see our Lord. The parable clearly teaches us that those attending the feast must wear a wedding garment. But keeping a garment white and unblemished demands vigilance and constant care on a daily basis. Purity is our aim, so we must strive against all that is evil, profane, and wicked. We can keep our garment white by walking in righteousness.

B. The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Mt 25:1–13)

Let us read Matthew 25:1–13. This parable is based on Jewish wedding customs. These weddings took place in the evening; therefore, those who were waiting for the bridegroom and the bride had to prepare their own lamps.

Understanding the Parable and Its Spiritual Teachings

Element	Represents	
Bridegroom	The bridegroom refers to Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ returns, He will receive His bride, the church. In the Bible, weddings are often used to teach about the second coming of Jesus Christ (Isa 62:5; Mt 22:1–4).	
	<p style="text-align: center;">New Testament Descriptions</p> <p>The New Testament often describes Jesus as the bridegroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled” (Jn 3:29). • “And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast’” (Mt 9:15; cf. Mk 2:19–20). • In Ephesians 5:25–32, the church is the wife of the Jesus Christ, who is head of the church. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Old Testament Descriptions</p> <p>In the Old Testament, God is described as the husband of Israel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth” (Isa 54:5). • “For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isa 62:5). • “I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy” (Hos 2:19).
Ten Virgins	The ten virgins represent the church members.	
Lamps	Lamps are containers for storing oil. Each oil lamp has a wick that needs to be trimmed in order to burn well. However, the wick will not burn without oil. The five foolish virgins prepared lamps and trimmed the wicks, but they had no oil.	
Oil	<p>In biblical times, oil was a necessity. You could not count on others to supply your oil. In this parable, five of the virgins had not prepared enough oil, so they were not ready to meet the bridegroom when he arrived.</p> <p>Spiritually, oil represents the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is powerful, and dwells within a person after they receive Him. A person has received the Holy Spirit when they speak in tongues (Acts 2:4; 19:6). There are many functions of the Holy Spirit (<i>Teachers: see Life Application: The effects of baptism of the Holy Spirit</i>). We need His power to lead us in living righteous lives. We cannot rely on our ministers or parents to provide the fullness of the Holy Spirit for us.</p>	
Wedding	Represents the second coming of Jesus Christ.	



Comparison of the Ten Virgins	
What are the similarities?	What are the differences?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All virgins 2. All waiting for the bridegroom 3. All had lamps 4. All slumbered and slept 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five were wise and five were foolish 2. The foolish took lamps, but no oil; the wise had both lamps and oil. The foolish virgins were not ready for the bridegroom; they tried to buy oil at a critical time. Being caught unprepared, they were left behind.

When Jesus Christ returns and takes the church as His bride, He will come at an unexpected moment. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2–3, Paul warns us: “For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”

Life Application: Are We Ready to Meet the Bridegroom?

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is a wake-up call for all of us. When we indulge in our worldly desires rather than remain spiritually sober, we are actually choosing to distance ourselves from God. That is why the bridegroom said to the foolish virgins, “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you” (Mt 25:12). The foolish virgins confessed the Lord with their mouths, but in their hearts and conduct, they were far from God (Jas 4:4–5).

We have been given so much in this life: God is our Savior, who has chosen us to be His people. Are you satisfied with going through life unprepared, even after receiving water baptism and the Holy Spirit? God has extended to us the greatest invitation of all: an invitation to the heavenly kingdom. Are we ready to meet the bridegroom? Jesus Christ will return at an unknown hour, so we must be ready for His arrival. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and fix our eyes on Jesus Christ at all times. We must make an effort constantly to be alert, watchful and mindful of His second coming.

Consider the following:

1. Why should we maintain our daily spiritual cultivation?
2. How can we lose sight of our salvation if we are caught up in the world and in sin?
3. In what ways can we fall asleep spiritually and lose our vigilance?
4. State a few ways we can fight against spiritual sleepiness.

“Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.”

(1 Thess 5:6–7)

Life Application: The Effects of Baptism of the Holy Spirit

While water baptism revives our spiritual lives, baptism of the Holy Spirit continuously imbues our spiritual lives with strength from above. Our lives are renewed day by day through the ministry of the Spirit, allowing us to mature spiritually so that we conform more and more to the image of Christ.

We know that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God (Jn 4:24). We need the Holy Spirit to enter the heavenly kingdom (Eph 1:13), help us in our daily lives (Jn 14:26), assure us of God’s presence (1 Jn 3:24), and intercede for us (Rom 8:26). With so many roles, it is only natural that we need the fullness of the Holy Spirit for a successful spiritual life! Paul exhorted the Christians at Ephesus saying, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). Wine is capable of causing a man

to become immoral. But the person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is able to find the strength to lead a wholesome spiritual life in Christ: a life that is totally changed.

Paul prayed for the Ephesian church “to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). This teaches us that walking in the Spirit requires that we are filled with the Spirit. Let’s read Galatians 5:16–25.

When we walk in the Spirit, we do what God wants us to do instead of what Satan or the world wants us to do. This passage also teaches us the visible characteristics that the Spirit produces, such as love and joy. If we do not produce this fruit in our lives, we know that we are not yet filled with the Holy Spirit, because without Him, we do not have God’s power to overcome our weaknesses (Acts 1:8). But in what way is the baptism of the Spirit a continual, long-term process?

Life Application: Filled with the Spirit Continually and Consistently

Water baptism is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, whereas baptism of the Spirit is a continual, long-term process. Many who receive the Holy Spirit stop working on their spiritual lifestyle. But we need to spiritually cultivate ourselves each and every day. We must constantly pray to God, read His word, meditate on His teachings, and put them into action. When we do, His Spirit fills our hearts, and we will find it easier to walk in the Spirit and do what He wants us to do. However, being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean we will stay filled. If we don’t maintain our spiritual lifestyle, the Spirit’s fullness will eventually go away. That is why it is a continual long-term process. It is a daily renewal that we need to actively practice (Tit 3:5), so that we are like the five wise virgins, ready and prepared for Jesus’ coming at any time.

Discussion

1. What obstacles prevent us from being continuously renewed by the Spirit each day?
2. What kind of personal support can we build up, find, or discover in order to maintain a fruitful spiritual lifestyle with the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

Check for Understanding

1. **What do these two parables teach us about?** They teach us to prepare for the second coming of Jesus Christ.
2. **Why is Jesus Christ compared to the bridegroom?** When Jesus Christ returns, He will receive His bride, the church.
3. **How were all ten virgins alike in what they did?** They were all waiting for the bridegroom; they all had lamps; all slumbered and slept.
4. **What made the wise virgins different from the foolish?** The wise virgins took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
5. **What does the oil represent? Why do we need to prepare enough?** The oil represents the Holy Spirit. We need to abide in Christ by living righteous lives. Only then will the bridegroom acknowledge and welcome us. (*BSG: Matthew, 7.2*).²
6. **What can we learn from the fact that the oil could not be shared?** We cannot rely on others, such as our parents, grandparents, or ministers to help us be filled with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, we cannot wait until Jesus Christ comes to start preparing ourselves—by that time, it would be too late.
7. **Why did not being watchful lead to such serious consequences?** When we indulge in our worldly desires rather than remain spiritually sober, we are actually choosing to distance ourselves from God.

² *Bible Study Guide: Matthew*, http://bsg.tjc.org/tjc_bsg_lesson/matthew-34/, 7.2: 4a.

That is why the bridegroom said to the foolish virgins, “Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you” (Mt 25:12). The foolish virgins confessed the Lord with their mouths, but in their hearts and conduct, they were far from God (Jas 4:4–5).

- 8. Why did Jesus Christ teach this parable?** Jesus Christ will return at an unknown hour, so we must be ready for His arrival. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and fix our eyes on Jesus Christ at all times. We must make an effort constantly to be alert, watchful and mindful of His second coming.

Memory Verse

“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”
(Matthew 25:13)

Meaning

1. “Watch” in Greek is *gregoreuo*. The term expresses a command. Here, Jesus directly commands us with His authority to watch! Jesus used “watch” fourteen times in the New Testament gospel books.
2. Jesus has not yet returned, but He has commanded us to watch. Let us read Mark 13:34–37. We need to watch because of two reasons: First, we do not know when He will return. Second, we need to be ready for when that day comes.

Conclusion

Everyone has now been extended an invitation to enter heaven. But as illustrated in the first parable, we can only remain if we accept His salvation by faith and wear the proper attire. Our ‘wedding’ garments must always be white, something achieved by purging our sins through water baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit in order to live a life of obedience, godly character, and good works. The second parable illustrates how we must be ready for Jesus Christ, as He will return at an unknown hour. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and fix our eyes on Jesus at all times. In this way, we can make a constant effort to be alert, watchful, and mindful of His second coming.

Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What are we watching for, and why do we need to watch for it?
The second coming of Christ. We do not know when it will come, but we must be prepared and ready for it.
2. What do these two parables teach us about?
How to receive and prepare for the second coming of Christ.
3. What does the wedding garment represent? What kind of life do we need to live to keep it white?
The wedding garment represents a righteous life. We must live a life of obedience to God's will, godly characteristics, and good works to keep it white.
4. What does the oil represent? What does it mean that it cannot be shared?
The oil represents the Holy Spirit. We cannot rely on others to help us fill ourselves with the Spirit. Maintaining our spirituality is something only we can do for ourselves. Further, we cannot wait until the second coming to start preparing – by then it will be too late.
5. What does it mean to fall asleep spiritually? How can we prevent this?
Falling asleep spiritually means losing our watchfulness and our vigilance. It means we are no longer waiting for the second coming and no longer living a righteous life with godly conduct. (Examples for how to prevent this may be those discussed during class.)
6. How can we actively renew ourselves daily in the Spirit?
Answers will vary. For example, remembering to keep God first, memorizing verses, spending more time in prayer, keeping peace with siblings/parents/family members, etc.