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# WISE OR FOOLISH ?

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# WISE OR FOOLISH?

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MATTHEW XXV., 1-13.

**W**E have here, in a few graphic sentences, a parabolic history of this present period, and how it has been and is affected by the hope of the Lord's return. This history is divided into four parts, viz. :—

- i. They went forth to meet the bridegroom.
- ii. They went in again to sleep.
- iii. They again go out to meet the bridegroom.
- iv. The bridegroom comes!

Three of these stages have been fulfilled and have become actual history. The fourth is immediately before us. At our very door.

We may note that the bride does not appear, as such, in this parable. If she did, it would be the earthly bride. The virgins are those who go out to light the bridegroom to the marriage. He is coming again with this in view, they go out to meet Him. When He comes they go in with Him to the marriage. Nothing as to their portion beyond this appears in the parable. All else is learnt from other Scriptures, and rightly suggests itself to the heart that expects Him.

## i.—THEY WENT FORTH TO MEET THE BRIDE-GROOM.

This gives us the first stage of the history. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom" (v. 1).

The company is likened to ten virgins; that is, it is set forth not in its corporate aspect, but as a company of individuals. It is those who, after the

Lord's departure from this world, took up their individual responsibility in connection with His coming back again. Ten is a numeral which sets forth in Scripture responsibility Godward.

There are three divisions to this first part, viz. :—

1. They took their lamps.
2. They went forth.
3. To meet the bridegroom.

They were a wonderful company on earth, whose affections had gone after their absent murdered Lord, and whose hearts were expecting His speedy return.

#### 1. THEY TOOK THEIR LAMPS.

They took nothing else. They were, and it was their business to be, the light in a dark scene. Christ *had* been the light of the world. He said, "I am the light of the world." (John viii., 12.) But again, and afterwards, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John ix., 5.) This the world would not have; it was too bright and searching for it. As when the Pharisees brought to Him the poor woman in John viii., they went out from His presence one by one, beginning from the oldest even to the least; being convicted in their own consciences as transgressors themselves.

In result, they raised their extinguisher and put out that light. They caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard and killed Him! Their Messiah! Their Lord! He, now, therefore, is no longer the light of this world, but God has Him on high,—

"The glorious light of courts above."

Painters are fond of representing Him as the light of the world with a lantern in His hand! So little do they apprehend the divine light that ever shone from Himself. Let them improve their picture. Alas! they cannot. No representation can set Him forth as light. Moral and spiritual light.

But He has not left the world in darkness yet. It

will come soon enough. "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." Now, by His grace, His own are here, a light in a dark scene, as He said, "Ye are the light of the world." And when He is gone, they become the only moral light there is. "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Cor. iii., 18, N.T.) Thus we become reflectors morally of the light that shines from His blessed face. As in the case of Stephen, whose face they beheld actually shining as the face of an angel. So it is written, "God . . . hath shined into our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv., 6.)

While it is solemnly possible for one to take a lamp, that is, to profess to be a light in this world, this is the only source of true light. It comes from the face of Christ. All else is *mere* profession.

## 2. THEY WENT FORTH.

Now, to go forth is to go out! They then went out of something. Doubtless the parable refers to their going out of their houses in the night season to meet the bridegroom. But it sets forth the fact of the early saints going out of the world that had murdered their Lord to meet Him on His return. They distinctly went out, leaving all behind save their lamps, as we have seen. All their earthly possessions were given up for new and heavenly possessions, which filled their souls to overflowing.

The Holy Spirit came down from an ascended Christ to fill His people's hearts with heavenly things, and as they are thus filled, they can afford to sit lightly to all earthly things. So it was in the beginning. They who were freshly imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit, and were transported with the view of Christ in

heaven, and their assured interest in Him there, gave up all their earthly possessions and went forth to meet Him when He should return. This was not lawful for any Jew to do as such. For the Jews held each his patrimony, by fee simple, from God Himself, and was not allowed to sell it outright, that no family should be wiped out of its God-given inheritance.

No one can say this to-day. No one can hold even a shilling by divine title. God, in His providence, may allow one to possess it, but he may lose it or be robbed of it. God's people to-day are not blessed with earthly blessings, but with heavenly, and these they do hold by divine title, and of these no one can rob them.

We may see how the apostles and brethren acted upon this practically in Acts ii., 44-47, and iv., 34-37. A very blessed scene, where they sold their possessions outright, and brought the money and laid it down at the apostle's feet, and had all things common.

But this very thing helped to bring out the distinction between this company and the world in those days, which was as sharp and well defined as that between white and black. Alas! now it is all grey! All commingled! There were also two things that kept them distinct, holiness inside and persecution outside. This is shown very plainly in Acts v. There Ananias and Sapphira are judged for lying to the Holy Ghost who dwelt in the Assembly. They wanted to have the credit of giving up everything, as others had done, while, at the same time, they retained part for themselves. No obligation was laid upon them, and they might have kept all and have been blameless, but they wished to appear what they were not, and were exposed and judged. Solemn fact! Yet that same Holy Spirit still dwells in the Assembly. Alas! how little is His presence owned!

After this it is said, "And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them, but the people magnified them." (Acts v., 13.) Holiness inside, prevented those who

loved it not, from linking themselves with this people in a place where a lie was punishable with death. To-day, God is the same in His nature and character, and although not dealing so summarily with that which is contrary to it, yet He eventually finds out those who are not what they profess to be. People may join themselves nowadays to a church to be respectable, or to bring grist to their mill, and they may argue that *white* lies, and *business* lies, or *lies for mother church*, may be told with impunity ; but God has said, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Rev. xxi., 8.)

Thus holiness inside, in those days, prevented unbelievers from coming in. But on the other hand we have, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (v. 14). That which repelled unbelief attracted faith. Believers could find no place where the nature they abominated was given its true place, but in the Assembly. There it was kept in the place of death, Christ having borne the actual judgment due to it on their behalf.

But persecution outside also prohibited any mere professional link with that wonderful company. The high priest rose up, and they that were with him, "And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison" (v. 18). This also repelled unbelievers. But nothing could stand before the power of God manifested on behalf of His own. The angel of the Lord liberated them, and said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people, all the words of this life" (v. 20).

In all this we see how distinctly this company was marked off from the world in early days, and how truly they "went forth," taking nothing but a light with them. Blessed men ! The prototypes of what in all ages of its passage through the earth the men who compose the Assembly ought to be. May the

Lord raise up more men of a like character in these last days! But the object of their thus going forth was

### 3. TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM.

They go to meet Him as those who know Him, and to light Him to the wedding—thus far the parable. In that which it sets forth, they also go to meet One whom they know. They do not go *as* the bride, nor does the bride appear as has been said. If she did it would be the earthly bride. It is in their individual responsibility they go forth, as those whose hearts have been weaned from the place where He whom they love was murdered, and have been filled with the glories of the place into which He has entered, and into which He is coming to take them also with Himself. It is into this they are ushered when He comes.

This Scripture speaks generally of the Lord's return, and we may note here that two sets of terms are used as to His coming. One set is calculated to strike terror into the hearts of His foes. As,—He shall come in flaming fire taking vengeance—as a judge—as the lightning flash—as a mighty flood of water carrying all before it. The other set of terms is calculated to draw out the hearts of those who love Him to Himself. As,—I will come and receive you to myself—the Lord Himself—this same Jesus. The term used in our Scripture is of the latter class. They would not be afraid of the bridegroom. They earnestly look to see Him. It will be to them the close of their night's sojourn in the scene of His rejection. The moment of the rising of a Sun that shall never set upon them.

Their position then was this: the Holy Spirit brought down news of the heavenly glory prepared for them into which Christ was gone. In effect, He came with a message from God. "If you won't have my Son to reign over you on earth, I'll have His people



to reign with Him in heaven!" This had turned their faces upward, and made them reflectors here on earth of the light of the glory that shone from the face of Christ. So that, despising earthly dignities and honours and emoluments, they left the world in spirit with all that it esteems, and went forth to meet that Blessed One when He should return to take them to share His joys in heaven, and to make all His promises for earth good to men of another moral generation from that unbelieving generation which had refused Him and cast Him out.

This sets forth the first stage of the history of the present period. It gives the true attitude of those who took up the testimony where the Lord left it. It is to be a witness, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the fact of the Lord's return to this earth to claim His own, whether for earth or for heaven. All who composed that company in those happy days were true men. All added by the Lord. All filled with the Holy Spirit, the only true power to sustain light.

But this state of things soon yielded to the vigilance of the enemy. Man, as ever, failing in his responsibility, the enemy succeeded first in creating division amongst them in heart, and then in introducing his children amongst them, so that their condition soon fell to what is described in *v. 2*, "Five of them were wise, and five were foolish." Into this state they lapse, and at the end are found thus.

The difference between the wise and the foolish is that, "They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps" (*vv. 3, 4*). Here the lamp sets forth profession; they who carry lamps profess to have light. But the foolish took *no* oil with them. This is the power to sustain light. Let it be noted that they took **NO** oil with them.

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps, and these could sustain light. Now, whenever

oil is spoken of typically in Scripture, it sets forth the Holy Spirit. He alone can sustain God's people as a light here. Profession is not enough. It possibly deceives some who may look upon such as light bearers; but those who know the character of the true light which now shines, will not be deceived by what men say. This is the crucial test of the difference between the two classes, the wise and the foolish. Have they the Holy Spirit, or have they not? "If any man have *not* the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Here for the moment they are left. Their state is described. The question, how to get the oil? is raised further on, with right and wrong methods, which we may consider in its place. Meantime, may we not ask our readers, How is it with you? Have *you* the Holy Spirit, the only true power to sustain light? Or, have you NO oil? You must be conscious of this! Are you a WISE virgin, or a FOOLISH one? A professor merely, or a possessor? Have you life and the Spirit, which to-day constitutes a Christian? Or, are you dead in trespasses and sins? All eternity, for *you*, reader, hangs upon the true answer to the above question. Can you give it? May the Lord enable you to fix thus your position with reference to the Lord's coming.

The second stage in this history is contained in the next verse.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they ALL slumbered and slept" (v. 5). Here we have the inspired description of the second stage of this parabolic history.

## ii THEY WENT IN AGAIN TO SLEEP.

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; and in the history, a waning hope and sickening heart obscured the light, until all were fast asleep in that world from which they had so brightly emerged but a little before.

This state of things is also described in Rev. ii., 13.

"I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan [is]; . . . where Satan dwells." (N.T.) The world with its attractions and offers of a present rest was too much for hearts in which the glories of heaven were growing dim through lack of faith and patience; and they yielded to the syren world, and are found here again within the sphere where Satan is god and prince, where also he makes his abode. Here, alas, they dwell together. Satan dwells there. *They dwell there.* A place which offered escape from the exigencies and asperities, the pressure and distress of the night vigils, and into which, with disloyalty of heart to their Lord, the virgins turned.

That they did go back into the world to sleep is evident, for when the midnight cry was raised they had again to "go forth" to meet Him. Indeed there was no sleep for them elsewhere. Maintaining a position of separation from the world, they could know nothing but its hatred and persecution. The only hope of escape from this, was to answer to its seductions and enchantments, and faithlessly yield to its embrace.

And this, helped on by those of the company who had nothing to sustain them during this period of deferred hope (the foolish virgins), was done by all alike, wise and foolish, for "While the bridegroom tarried, they ALL slumbered and slept."

This answers to what transpired in

### CONSTANTINE'S DAYS,

by which time the so-called bishops—man-made, had appeared upon the scene, and who, unlike their predecessors, now clamoured for the once despised places, honours and emoluments of this world; and being made great men in the empire, put their hands upon each other's throats in shameless rivalry as to who should hold the highest places. Albeit, many of them were godly men, and yielded their lives for the truth,

as indicated by Antipas, God's faithful witness, who was slain amongst them where Satan dwelleth.

The world fawned upon the Church in order to be accredited by it; and the Church smiled upon the world in return for its favours. The world lifted up its hand from its low moral platform, and the Church falsely gave its hand to the enemy of her Lord from off its high spiritual platform, and common ground was taken upon which the murderers of the Lord, and those who should have testified against them could walk hand in hand together. This, no doubt, was an elevation for the world, but it was a lowering of both standard and crest for the saints, and this to the falsest of friends—their most murderous enemy! Meantime

#### WHILE THE BRIDEGROOM TARRIED

larger purposes of God's heart were being fulfilled than had entered into their hearts. Not that promise had failed, or that love on His part had lost its eagerness. Still His eye was upon them and His heart yearning over them! Still was His Spirit with them to sustain and comfort them! Their eyes and heart had, alas, ceased to be wholly occupied with Him, and while He who loved them tarried, they allowed that which had sprung from the heart of the wicked servant of the previous parable, who said there, "My Lord delayeth his coming," to enter into their hearts. Here the effect of evil communications soon makes itself apparent, and a listlessness and sleep, *as death*, seizes upon them.

Oh, why did they not maintain their position! Why did they lose confidence in Him that had promised! Why not have sustained themselves with the consolations of that Holy Comforter! Why did they yield to the enemy! Ah! Why? Alas for human hearts! Why?

They did *not* maintain their position. They *did* lose confidence in the promise. They did *not* sustain

themselves by the consolations of the Holy Spirit. They yielded to the enemy. They went back into the world from which they had come out, to go to sleep!

All, ALL alike, wise and foolish,

### THEY ALL SLUMBERED AND SLEPT.

Very little difference between them while all were thus asleep. Very little use to Him for whom they waited would sleeping virgins be, even though they had oil for sustaining light. A sleeping man is all as good as dead for any practical purpose. Oh, sleep! What hast thou not done for God on earth! What hast thou not done for His saints!

Sleep! And all is lost. Sleep! And a wily enemy that never sleeps has gained his point, whatever it may be.

Sleep! And the manifestation of the glory of Christ so dazes a Peter, that he would lower his Master to the level of a Moses or an Elias. (Luke ix., 32-33.)

Sleep! And the agony and bloody sweat of the Son of Man is unheeded by a Peter, a James, a John! (Luke xxii., 44, 45.) Glory and sorrow alike are too much for mortal man, who must sleep in the presence of both!

Sleep! Aye, and while men slept the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way, well satisfied with that day's work. (Matt. xiii., 25.)

Sleep! And the hearts of true men give up hope even as the hearts of fools! All that should distinguish and characterize them is yielded, and Christ, the Coming One, has no more a testimony held for Him in the scene of His rejection.

The devil sings his lullabye, and the foolish saints, willingly deceived, tuck themselves in, and go comfortably to sleep. Light may shine from His blessed face, but it shines in vain for those who are asleep, even as for those who have no eye. The eye, given of God to discern, is thus practically put out.

By the same means wherewith he holds sinners from coming to Christ for salvation does the enemy hold saints from practically taking their place in expectancy of His return.

Here's a good place in the empire for you, my lord bishop. Go to sleep. Go to sleep !

Here's a gold mine for you who love the glitter of the perishing metal. Go to sleep. Go to sleep !

Here's a general managership or inspectorship for you. Hushabye ! Go to sleep. Go to sleep !

Here's a farm (five yoke of oxen) for you ; a good business (a piece of merchandise) for you ; a wife for you. Hushabye ! Hushabye ! Go to sleep !

And ALL slumbered and slept while the bridegroom tarried. And there, all alike, are held in sleep as in death. With lamps indeed, but all untrimmed. With light, but hidden under a bed, or under a bushel. A lamp alone will do when all are asleep, no light is needed then. And so the foolish are as good as the wise ; and the wise, alas, upon a common practical level with the foolish.

So, with this company, did the enemy succeed ! And so were they content that He for whom they waited should come and find none upon their watch-tower ! But blessed be His name for ever, this will not content His heart. He will arouse them with an Awake ! Awake !! But these were

#### DARK AGES

indeed. Ages in which the light that was in them was darkness, or if some ray did escape 'twas but as a dream to sleeping souls, and passed away from them as a baseless vision. The coming of the Lord is indeed found in the rubrics of these dark ages, but it is relegated to "the end of the world." He tarries ! He delays His coming !! Even then it is known only as the coming of a Judge, before whom, all, even His own, must stand, to know there, and for the first time, whether they are His or not !!

Were there not any then, that held to the true position and awaited Him as the bridegroom? God, surely, may have had His hidden ones among the mass, whose hearts were right, and whose lamps were bright ; but these were lost amid the crowd, or persecuted for the truth's sake, and Christendom, that vast professing thing, sailed on as if they were not.

History repeats itself, and that which is true of the company becomes true at various times of the individuals that form that company. Many a man has, in later years, gone brightly forth to meet the bridegroom, and by reason of the same tarrying has gone in again to go to sleep in that world from which he came out. How unlike Himself is this ! He whose locks were wet with the dew of heaven, as on Olivet's side He spent whole nights in prayer to God, gathering there the strength needed for the demands upon Him in the coming day !

But thus the second stage of this history leaves the company in the world again where Satan dwells, and all slumbering and asleep. Mark ! This stage is also fulfilled.

i. They did go out to meet the bridegroom.

ii. They did all go in again to go to sleep.

And this, as far as man is concerned, is the result of the way they fulfilled their responsibility towards God, to announce amid the darkness, by their very light, the coming of their Lord ; and to hold for Him in this scene until He should come. But this introduces the third stage, viz. :

iii. THEY AGAIN GO OUT TO MEET HIM.

God is not satisfied that He who is His Son should come and find a sleeping company, and so at midnight, when things are at their darkest, He sends forth the cry ; " Behold the bridegroom, go ye out to meet Him " (v. 6). Here the word " cometh " should be omitted. It makes His coming more imminent ; as though it were said : Behold Him, He is at the door !

God woos again His people, as He will also Israel in a coming day. He says, "Hearken to me my people, and give ear unto me. . . . My righteousness is near. . . . Lift up your eyes to the heavens."

They cry, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord ; awake as in the ancient days."

And He replies, "Awake, awake, stand up, O my people. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, put on thy beautiful garments ! Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her ; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Is. li.—lii.)

Again, "Arise, shine for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." (Is. lx., 1.) Wherefore He saith, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee." (Eph. v., 14, N.T.)

### THE MIDNIGHT CRY

has also in grace been raised in Christendom. Seventy years ago God sent forth His heralds in the power of the Spirit to shake a sleeping Christendom to its very centre with the astounding cry, Awake, awake ! Behold, behold the bridegroom ! Go ye forth to meet Him ! Some few saints were first awakened by this cry. Enquiry was raised ; Scriptures were opened up ; proofs were forthcoming, and hundreds of preachers again heralded it, until at last there is scarcely a portion of Christendom where, with a greater or lesser degree of light and accuracy as to details, the coming of the Lord as a doctrine is not known.

So has our God in His mercy given another opportunity to that company in this stage of its history to prove its desire for, and faithfulness to, Him for whom they should wait. Infinite mercy of our God ! A revival of truth in the midst of the years ! Happy the people that is in such a case, yea, happy the people whose God is the Lord.



At the first this happiness was possessed by a few, who again went forth, taking nothing but a light. They trimmed their lamps, they sold their possessions, and laid aside their honours to announce again their coming absent Lord. In unison with the Spirit and the bride they called upon Him to come, and in view of His near approach took up the cry, Behold the bridegroom! The ironical world looked on, chagrined at this renewal of divine and living power, and asked, How long will this new freak satisfy their hearts? Alas, how long!

Eventually, in effect,

ALL THOSE VIRGINS AROSE AND TRIMMED THEIR  
LAMPS.

Trim a lamp that has oil in it—remove the excrescences that are the result of the burning of oil through a wick in the atmosphere, and up shoots the light. Blessed be God, although to their shame the wise virgins had gone in to go to sleep, yet, now that they were awake this was all they had to do, and they stood ready again to light the bridegroom when He should come to the marriage.

But of what use is it to trim a lamp that has no oil in it? The more it is trimmed the more surely it will go out. Light a wick with no oil and you may produce a kind of flash-in-the-pan, but trim it and it will go out. And so the foolish are discovered, and stand convicted in their own consciences.

While all slept all were alike. A spiritually dead man is as good as a sleeping man for the moment. A lamp will do for this state of things. All are at ease and in quiet. But let all be aroused as God has aroused them according to His own purpose, and then the difference between the wise and foolish appears. The brightness of the light from the lamps of the wise shines out, but the failure on the part of the foolish (for they are looked at in the parable as the same virgins that at

first went forth) becomes apparent even to themselves, and they turn to the wise, saying, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out !"

This cry at midnight has certainly produced an awakening almost universal in Christendom. Wise and foolish are all awake and all at work. We hear very little, if at all nowadays, of the old-fashioned card-playing and fox-hunting parsons. The dark days when all slept were more suitable to this kind of thing, and produced it. But when the thought of the Lord's coming takes possession of hearts, and all are more or less alive to it, these things will not pass muster.

The cry has set in motion a huge wheel of work, as it were, which goes round and round and round, and groans out *work ! WORK ! WORK !!!* The wise are really at work again for their Master now, and in His light down here while awaiting His return. The foolish are working to get that which they know they have not, and thus prepare themselves for His coming, whom they are consciously unready to meet. One set, therefore, is at work for the Lord as His servants, the other for themselves. The one with some sense of their shame in having gone to sleep, and it may be with some of the effects still hampering them ; the other with a foolish idea that they can obtain by their own efforts and means what alone will render them competent to sustain light for Him when He comes.

It having thus become evident what constitutes the difference between the wise and the foolish, the result of the demand of the foolish upon the wise,

### GIVE US OF YOUR OIL,

with the answer of the wise, may now be looked at.

This is the cry of the awakened foolish virgins, when they become conscious that they are not prepared to do that which by their profession they had undertaken.

Alas ! how little they understand, either what the oil is, or how to obtain it. They understand, however,

that their own lamps are "going out" (see margin). What a discovery for them to make !

Their feeble will-o'-the-wisp which they had mistaken for real light would not, now that the bridegroom was announced as at hand, stand them in stead ; they themselves are conscious that it is "going out." It must be a solemn moment in the history of a foolish virgin. May this not be the experience of any of our readers.

They then first seek the wise. Ah ! they that are foolish know who are wise. In other words, the mere professors know who are real men. And though they may revile them and belittle them in the eyes of others, yet when real alarm lays hold of them they know who to seek. They will not seek at such a moment mere officialism, but they know and seek the wise virgins—the real men amid the mass of profession. But they ask an impossible thing at their hands, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

The wise virgins could not possibly give them of their oil. They had it for themselves and for themselves alone, and so they rightly say—We cannot,

**"LEST THERE BE NOT ENOUGH FOR US AND YOU."**

Now we have seen that the oil, when used typically, always means the Holy Spirit. On the face of it, it is impossible for any one believer to impart to another the Holy Spirit, as given him of God for himself. No one can give to another "of your oil" as the foolish ask. God did use men in olden times, vessels of inspiration to be the instruments of conveying the Holy Spirit to others, but even that was not "of your oil," and that day is past. The apostles certainly have no successors in this.

If this were possible, how many are there who would at this moment impart to some loved one ! How many a wife to her husband, or mother to her children ! How many a child to his parents ! But,

no! it cannot be. God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ only can give the Holy Spirit, and that as the fruit of redemption's work alone. Hence before this work was accomplished, God's people were taught that their heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, and this certainly involved the work which He who taught them was about to perform.

Now this, the first endeavour of the foolish virgins to get the oil was fruitless, being in a wrong direction. No doubt the advice of the wise virgins,

"BUT GO YE RATHER TO THEM THAT SELL AND BUY  
FOR YOURSELVES"

was right, and intended to direct the foolish virgins to the true source, whence this oil could be "bought" in a Scriptural sense, that is "without money and without price." But this was misunderstood by the foolish, who now go to "buy" by their own efforts that which can never be thus obtained.

This exactly introduces us to the moral state that surrounds us at this moment, in the which three of these four stages of the history of this company have transpired. Mark, they—the first three stages of this history—are *past*; never to be gone over again as far as the company is concerned, and *we* are landed at the very verge of the last.

What then is the state of things that surrounds us to-day? It is a day of activity; a day of Christian endeavour. Does this mean endeavour to be a Christian? Alas! a futile endeavour! See the end of such. In this state all are busy. The wise, although, it may be, dazed with their long sleep, yet in the way set forth in this parable are right. They are able to sustain light amid the darkness, and to maintain good works here, for the which they have been anew created. And God who created them in Christ Jesus has also prepared the good works that they should walk in them. (Eph. ii., 10.)

But there are others at work beside the wise.

WHILE THEY WENT TO BUY THE BRIDEGROOM CAME.

The foolish have been aroused, and misunderstanding the advice of the wise, are now seeking to "buy" the oil by their own efforts. An equally fruitless effort with their first attempt, and which ends fatally. But how are they seeking to buy the oil? Do not all the unchristian methods introduced into so-called Christian work tell of the influence of the foolish virgins in their endeavour to buy the oil? Surely they do. Their bazaars and bazaar auctions; their fancy and international fairs and sacred concerts all tell of the desire to be accredited as those who are what they are conscious they are not.

But all this, though it may pass muster with some, cannot deceive Him who is coming as the Bridegroom, and, alas for them, as the Judge. All attempts to buy the oil thus come near to that which Peter so scathingly denounced, "Thy money perish with thee because thou hast thought that the gift of God can be purchased with money."

How is it now with my readers?

WISE OR FOOLISH? WHICH?

You are part of this company certainly; part of this great profession. For see: there are three great companies on earth: 1. The Jews. 2. That which takes up the responsibility in this present time, after the Jews have been set aside for unfaithfulness, that is Christendom. 3. The Gentiles or heathen. (1 Cor. x., 32.)

Now if I ask you, are you a Jew? you will probably answer, No! Are you a heathen? No! Thank God I was born in a Christian country. Exactly. That is your lamp of profession as one of this company. There remains now another question to ask you.

Are you a wise virgin or a foolish one? One or other of these you surely are—Which? Oh, my reader, I ask you which?

But an exercised soul may reply: Alas! yes I admit that I have not the Holy Spirit. But is there no way of obtaining that which I so much desire? This is indeed another question, and to any such we may point out that the Lord Jesus still invites all to Him as the only One who can give the Holy Spirit. But there must be something that precedes this as far as you, dear exercised soul, are concerned, and that is, the Blood. The knowledge of the value of the blood of Christ as cleansing *you* from sin.

The Lord Jesus in the last and Laodicean days of Christendom, and while standing outside the hearts of individuals says:—"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed . . . and eye-salve that thou mayest see." (Rev. iii., 18.) Here the eyesalve also sets forth what the oil indicates—the Holy Spirit. The Lord invites even the professor to buy of Him ere it be too late, and He sells without money and without price.

In the Old Testament there are four sorts of persons who are anointed, or sprinkled with oil; typical of the giving of the Holy Spirit.

First, we have the priest anointed with oil. Now you, dear reader, cannot receive the Holy Spirit, primarily, as a priest, for you own you are a sinner. And though you may become a priest, yet you need to know how you can receive the Holy Spirit as a sinner.

Then the prophet was anointed, and you cannot receive the Holy Spirit as a prophet.

Then, again, the king was anointed, and you cannot receive the Holy Spirit as a king. If, therefore, there was no other class anointed you might indeed despair.

But, blessed be God, there is also a fourth class, and that is the leper, who was also anointed with oil

after having been cleansed with blood, and this typifies the sinner. So that now, dear reader, you may hope.

A very brief sketch of Lev. xiv. may help us to understand how the

### CLEANSING AND ANOINTING THE LEPER

applies to the case. It was recognised by the Jews that no one but God could *cleans*e the leper. Hence he was left outside the pale of human influence and habitation, and thrown absolutely on the mercy of God. If the leprosy was stayed and the leper healed, the finger of God was recognised. It was this that made the cleansing of the leper by Christ a testimony to the priests that He who thus cleansed was God. Perchance this laid the foundation for that "great company of priests" to become "obedient to the faith" (Acts vi., 7.) But the priest could *pronounce* clean, and this was based upon ceremonies which set forth Christ's work for the sinner.

On the first day

### TWO BIRDS ALIVE AND CLEAN

were offered. One bird was slain in an earthen vessel over running water ; then the living bird was, with its feathers sprinkled with the blood of the slain bird, let loose in the open field.

Now this is a type of Christ's death and resurrection. The bird of heaven, killed in an earthen vessel over running water, is He who came from heaven to do God's will in the body (earthen vessel, 2 Cor. iv., 7), prepared for Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. He who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, alone could accomplish God's will so that believers might be sanctified. All that was in God demanded the resurrection of that Blessed One, who had thus wrought His will, and He is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.

Far beyond the type of the blood-stained living bird, Jesus, alive from the dead, enters as a man those

opened heavens. and takes His seat upon the throne of God. Wonderful fact ! He has carried the credentials of our pardon up to the very throne of God Himself, upon which He sits. The leper also is sprinkled and is pronounced clean.

This, the first day's offerings, shows the death and resurrection of Christ chiefly in their aspect Godward—God's claims met. And though the leper is pronounced clean, yet more is required. His conscience and need of power must be answered, and this the eighth day's offerings typify. Under the shelter of the death of Christ, on the seventh day he shaves off all natural growth and adornment from head, beard, and eyebrows ; cleanses his circumstances (garments) ; and bathes his flesh ; but comes not yet into his tent, though in the camp.

The eighth day's offerings consist of a trespass offering, together with sin, burnt and meat offerings, and a log of oil. The details are mostly connected with the first and last of these, and with them we have to do in this paper.

### THE BLOOD OF THE TRESPASS OFFERING

sets forth the application of the blood of Christ to particular acts of sin. This is necessary to clear the conscience. The ear, the hand, the foot have all been engaged in sin against God.

The ear—given of God to hear His voice—has been used to listen to any and every voice but His. It needs sanctifying by the blood. Hence the priest dips the forefinger of his right hand into the blood which is in the palm of his left hand, and puts of that blood upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed.

The hand, instead of working for God, as it should have done, has been used to work for self, and needs to be sanctified with blood, which is put upon the thumb of the right hand.



The foot, which should have been used for walking in the ways of God, has been exercised to carry the leper whither he would ; it also needs setting apart to God. The blood is therefore put upon the great toe of the right foot.

Ear and hand and foot are thus sanctified to God by *blood*. This, dear reader, must precede any application of the oil. Have you been sanctified by the precious blood of Christ ? If not, it is impossible for you to obtain the Holy Spirit. Only where the efficacy of that blood is known can the Holy Spirit come. As in the type, only where the blood of the trespass offering is can the holy anointing oil be put. "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured." (Ex. xxx., 32.)

But if the blood has done its work, then the oil can be put where the blood is. Consequently, the priest takes

#### THE LOG \* OF OIL

and repeats with the oil what he did with the blood, and puts it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed ; on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot ; upon the blood of the trespass offering. In the application, special power is given to overcome special sins, so that the sphere of my defeat is the sphere of my greatest victory. Then the rest of the oil is poured upon the head, and descends generally over the person.

Here, then, we have the divine answer to the enquiry of an anxious soul as to how the Holy Spirit can be obtained. It is intimately connected with the death of Christ, and takes possession of hearts which have learned the value of the blood. Do you know the value of Christ's blood, dear reader ? Have you believed in Christ as Son of God, who gave Himself as a trespass offering for your own particular sins ?

\* A log is a liquid measure containing a little more than three-quarters of a pint.

If so, listen to the language of the New Testament : "In whom, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." (Eph. i., 13, 14.)

If my reader has believed in the gospel of his (not someone else's) salvation, he is, upon the authority of the word of God, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and this *until the redemption of the purchased possession*. In other words, until Christ takes possession of all He has redeemed. Such a one may now await with calmness the moment of the coming of the Bridegroom, assured that he has God-given power to sustain light, as a wise virgin, until He shall come.

If this is not the case ; if the blood is despised, and confidence is placed in one's own works ; if, in the language of the parable, my reader is going to "buy the oil" (*i.e.*, to buy the Holy Spirit), then he is nothing but a foolish virgin.

Solemn to be found a foolish virgin when the closing act of this history shall come upon us ! Remember, we stand to-day upon the very verge of it—*it is the next thing in the order of events*. Nothing but a moment, the twinkling of an eye, between us and it. Let this have its weight with you, my reader.

### CONSIDER

1. That the first stage of this history is past, never to be recalled. The Lord might have come in that period. Nothing in the parable to hinder it. The same virgins who go out to meet the Bridegroom, are they who go in again to go to sleep, and again go out to meet Him ; to whom also He comes. For this reason the language is so couched that they at all times might be ready.

2. That the second stage of this history is also past, never to be recalled. The Lord might have come during this stage, but He did not.

3. That the third stage is rolling its course, surrounds us on every hand morally.

4. To this the fourth *must* succeed, which is, *He comes*.

### ARE YOU READY ?

iv.—“WHILE THEY WENT TO BUY THE BRIDEGROOM CAME.”

This *must* be the case, or there is no true application of the parable, and no truth in Scripture.

The condition of things on earth at the time here set forth is that some are ready and some are not ready. The parable certainly indicates that when the Bridegroom comes, some *half* of those who compose this Christendom of ours will be found unready. Is it not also indicated that they are consciously unready? What is the meaning of their going to buy the oil, otherwise? Spite of all fair appearances, and all the works,—Christian, so called,—in which these foolish virgins are engaged, there is underneath it all a sense that the Lord is coming; that things cannot go on as they are, and that they are not ready. All the bestowal of money, or goods, or time has not really satisfied the heart. There never has been a real desire for the Lord in the hearts of these foolish virgins; but the fear of being found to be other than they profess to be, urges them to seek by activity to salve their own conscience and to deceive others. They are painfully conscious that He cannot be deceived.

The Lord, however, is not looking for service in this parable, but for that state of expectancy which shall desire Himself, and be satisfied with nothing else. The Holy Spirit alone can keep alive this love for Christ, and the Holy Spirit cannot be purchased by money, or effort of any kind. So that those who seek to obtain in this way what is needed never can be ready, and will be found in this state of unreadiness;

yet still seeking to buy the oil, when the Lord comes  
“While they went to buy the bridegroom came.”

“THEY THAT WERE READY WENT IN WITH HIM TO  
THE MARRIAGE.”

Happy moment for the ready virgins! A bliss supreme, divine! Far more than appears in this parable is their portion when thus shut in with the Bridegroom. For though the state of things at that moment did not admit of a revelation of all that awaited them, yet we know now that a heavenly portion is theirs, as they were awaiting a heavenly, absent Lord. Here, nothing further is given us than that they went in “with Him” to the marriage. To any heart that loves Him, and is really in the spirit of expectancy for Him, to be with Him is enough to satisfy.

Blessed, indeed, to be found among that company,—Will it be half?—who with girded loins and burning lamps shall hail the coming of the Lord, for whom they have waited with joy. Not in vain will have been the darkness and sorrow of the night to them when they behold His blessed face. They at least have loved Him because of His love to them; and though they have failed, yet are their hearts bound in love to Himself, and to see His face will alone satisfy the earnest longing of their souls, which may have been sickened by hope deferred. This moment will have now arrived, and they enter with complete satisfaction into His presence, to go no more out for ever.

“AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT.”

These are five of the most solemn words that were ever uttered. And when, in their fulfilment, the horrors contained in them flash into the consciences of those who are outside that closed door, one can conceive nothing more appalling! Nothing so like

hell upon earth! The door closed, and we outside for ever!

Certainly, at the close of that door, mercy's stream, as it is now flowing throughout Christendom, will be cut off from that channel for ever. Not one drop of mercy will percolate through that closed door for those who have despised mercy. Nor will a chink of the door be opened to let one single doomed soul in from that, then, God forsaken place.

Now, the doors through which mercy's stream flows, open easily and freely. They are, as it were, double doors, hung on double hinges. They open outward, to let the mighty tide of mercy, from the heart of God, through Christ, flow in full flood to the chief of sinners. They open inwards, to let that returning wave, bearing upon its crest the saved sinner, back to the heart of God. Such is God's mercy now. Then it will be dammed up. The stream diverted into another channel, perchance, but not one drop of mercy will flow for a Christ-despising Christendom. "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

Oh, the horrors of that moment, when the truth forces itself upon the heart! When the doom pronounced by the Lord shall burst upon the soul! "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." (Rev. xxii., 11.) While on the other side of that shut door, the rest of the verse is blessedly true, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

How changed the scene now. They who had companied together for years upon earth, now separated for ever. They that are shut in, are shut in; and they that are shut out, are shut out. For ever and for ever!

Now consider the position these foolish virgins are in at the moment thus described. Their companions are gone—those whom they knew as real Christians. Where? What means this sudden and mysterious disappearance? Is it the fulfilment of their word that

the Lord was coming to take them thus away? Oh! they cry,—

### THE LORD HAS COME!

And we are left behind, outside that door, to await an irrevocable doom! So that before the judgment is actually poured out upon these false professors—the foolish virgins of the parable—the conviction is forced upon their consciences, that even ere they pass the portals of death they have “left hope behind.” What though they should endeavour to bolster themselves up with a hopeless hope? What though they think, by their entreaties, to move the Lord to pity? They have refused His mercy; He will hold them to their responsibility.

Let it be again noted that it is exactly at the moment of the state of things that surrounds us now morally that the whole scene is closed, as far as mercy is concerned. It is “while they went to buy, the bridegroom came.” Here, evidently, is an end of all buying. The event for which they were trying to prepare themselves is past, and they are not found ready. Only they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. The unready, who stand on the outside of that closed door,—Shall they not know it? Yea, surely!

They will miss their friends, their relatives; in some cases, alas! wife, husband, parents, children, and will set about to seek them. As they seek, they will meet others, who, like themselves, never *intended* this to happen; who *expected* to be ready in time, and who are on the same fruitless search for friends and relatives of every degree. Then shall burst upon their terror-stricken consciences the truth of their awful position. And then, for the first time, these foolish virgins turn to the Lord.

“AFTERWARDS CAME ALSO THE OTHER VIRGINS.”

But, alas, it is too late! Occupied up to this with

the endeavour to buy the oil! Frittering away their precious time thus! They had, apparently, never dreamt of turning to Him, from whom alone it can be obtained, until the time is past. Up to the very last He has been making overtures to them, but all unheeded by them. They know Him not! They believe Him not!

Now they come, having missed their friends, and without that which would have enabled them to enter with the Lord, and demand an admittance, being neither prepared, nor suited for the place. Impotent demand! Vain appeal! Mercy's day for them is over,—albeit, they appeal not for mercy, but for admittance upon other grounds. Have we not patronized Thy cause? Have we not made mention of Thy name? Do we not now call Thee Lord, Lord?

But they are shut out, and they know it. They would fain escape the terrible results of being shut out, though they have not, have never had, any sympathy, anything in common with what is going on within. The Holy Spirit has never made good to their souls the joys of that marriage scene; they have been, and are, strangers to it, but to be lost! LOST!! Ah, this is another thing! We never meant to be LOST!!!

LORD! LORD! OPEN TO US!

But the door is shut, and their doom is fixed, eternally. Oh, how important to avail ourselves of what is offered to us now, while it may be ours. Who can conceive what this awful experience must be to those who endure it? Yet is this scene depicted by Him who knows all things, the end from the beginning, and who draws aside the curtain, if perchance some may be warned in time.

How changed now the aspect of the Lord towards Christendom. Up to the time of the fulfilment of those five solemn monosyllables, "And the door was

shut," He woos ; they scornfully reject His overtures ; He beseeches, they despise His entreaties ; He commands, they wilfully disobey.

Now they would woo Him, but in vain. They beseech, they demand—there is but one answer from within that unopened door. The solemn words shall ring in their ears, "Because I have called and ye refused. I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh.

. . . Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer : they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." (See Pro. i., 24-33.) So in our parable, but He answered, and said,

"VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, I KNOW YOU NOT."

In hopeless despair they turn away, the wail of the lost wrung from their hearts, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. viii., 20.) What must the result of such a condition of things be? What would be your feelings, my reader, if *you* should suddenly wake up, as some must do, to the consciousness of the fact that you were too late, and that nothing but judgment and hell awaited you? This, as we have remarked, is more like hell upon earth than anything that we can conceive. But, like as it may be to hell upon earth, what is it to hell IN HELL? Who may describe this? Alas, the lost must know it!

Oh, the folly of those who now refuse all the overtures of wisdom, and all His counsels, to buy of Him who sells the oil without money and without price. Those who turn aside after any who slightly heal their wounds and cry, "Peace! peace! when there is no peace!"

May the reader rather turn to Him who having shed His blood, now sells the oil without money, without price, and so become WISE!