

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Matthew 25:1-2

Solomon said, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*" (Prov 9:10) He also said, "*Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.*" (Prov 9:6) Here, in this parable, the LORD contrasts the wise and the foolish virgins, and in so doing explains the difference between those professors of faith who enter the kingdom of heaven and those who are shut out.

The nation of Israel considered themselves to be wise, most especially the Pharisees and Chief Priests, yet their ultimate rejection of CHRIST as their KING and RULER, manifested their innate foolishness. They assumed (with a great deal of pride and presumption) that they were the heirs of the kingdom of GOD simply because of their natural birth and supposed adherence to the Law of Moses. This attitude is akin to the multitude of those today who consider that they are heirs of this Kingdom because they have a profession of faith in CHRIST.

For the last 100 years the emphasis in preaching among the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians is that a man is a true believer simply because he makes a decision to be. The new birth is said, by most, to be an event which is the result of a man using his own free will to decide to be a follower of CHRIST, through either an outward confession by his mouth or through some action such as baptism in water, or aligning himself with some religious organization purporting itself to be the true church.

The scripture is quite clear that the opposite is actually true. Those who are possessors of true faith believe as a result of being born again by the SPIRIT of GOD rather than vice versa. It is impossible for a man to have true faith apart from a supernatural work of GOD to awaken him from the deadness of his natural sinful state. "*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*" (John 3:7) "*Even when we were dead in sins, (HE) hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*" (Eph 2:5). "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Eph 2:8-9)

With this in mind we can make several observations about the similarities and contrasts between those who are considered wise and those who are considered foolish.

All ten of these characters in the LORD's parable were virgins. A virgin is symbolic of that which is pure and in this parable I believe they represent those who have some sort of profession of faith that they expect will give them an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. They are not the unrepentant, profligate and profane members of the human race who shall all likewise perish.

In this particular illustration I believe the foolish virgins are used by the LORD to illustrate the natural nation of Israel. By inference and according to the meaning of this parable as we might apply it in the present day these foolish "virgins" would also represent those who call themselves Christians but who in reality are so in name only without the fruit of the SPIRIT or the evidence of the new birth. The wise virgins, on the other hand, illustrate those who are the true sons of GOD, who are given the gift of salvation manifested by the indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT in each one.

Those who are "wise" are made so by the sovereign grace of GOD totally apart from any merit or innate ability on their part. A man might increase his level of knowledge by study and personal endeavor but "wisdom" is a gift bestowed by GOD. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." How can a man fear GOD except that the LORD gives him such reverence and awe? By nature men scoff at the WORD of GOD and cannot worship HIM in SPIRIT and TRUTH.

Both the wise and the foolish had lamps. Lamps are a source of light. All religions of the earth which men are attracted to have some form of "light". In the case of the Jews, they were given a great deal of light. *"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."* (Rom 3:1-2) While they were given great light, they preferred darkness, and even sought to kindle a light of their own making, all the while professing that they loved GOD's light. *"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."* (Isa 50:11)

There are many so called "Christians" today who have done the same thing. They have hired teachers, who are willing to tickle their ears with a pleasant message which soothes their souls, salves their conscience, and leaves them sevenfold more the children of hell than before they heard it. They have turned aside from sound doctrine and believed myths and lies rather than truth. Surely Paul's prophecy has come true, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."* (II Tim 4:3-4)

While both the wise and foolish had oil in their "lamps" only the wise had "oil in their vessels". Oil is often typical of grace and the HOLY SPIRIT in the scriptures. A man may possess some "religious light" but unless HE is possessed by the HOLY GHOST and indwelt by the same, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* II Cor 5:17) Men often make the mistake of thinking that the lighting of the lamp is the same as the continual burning of it. A man's lamp may be lit with a small amount of oil, but the only way that the lamp can continue to burn is with an abundant and continual supply of oil. *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it."* (1Th 5:23-24)

The wise and the foolish virgins both fell asleep when they should have been watching. All men, whether they be the sons of GOD or the children of wrath, are alike by nature. All are worthy of destruction and all are prone to fail and prove unfaithful. Loud confessions and human determination are just as apt to fail in one as the other. Witness Peter for example who said that he would not forsake the LORD, though all others might. Yet he was the first one to deny the LORD, before the cock crowed. *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves."* (Acts 20:28) *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."* (Mat 24:42)

Only the wise had sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning. They each had just enough for themselves. *"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* (1 Pet 4:17-18)

The wise were able to go in with the BRIDEGROOM, while the foolish were shut out. The BRIDEGROOM said *"I know you not"* (v.12) to those who came too late. Is this not exactly what HE said to those in the seventh chapter of Matthew, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* (Mat 7:21-23)

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