

July 4, 2010

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF WEDDING PLANNING

### MATTHEW 25.1-13

*Jesus exhorts and encourages his disciples to be prepared always for his coming by emphasizing the consequences of being unprepared as well as the benefits of being prepared.*

#### 1. THE TEN VIRGINS PREPARING TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM (1-5)

**The kingdom of heaven is like... (1):** parable = allegory = a story about another story. (Concerning the kingdom of heaven [KoH], cf. Mt 13).

KoH is glorious and complex so that it cannot be summarized with one story. This story speaks about its arrival and prep for it.

Coming of the KoH = the coming of the Son of Man; just different emphasis. Son of Man comes to Ancient of Days and receives the kingdom (Dan 7); all old creation structures are being transformed.

KoH = *the entire created order arranged under the lordship of Jesus.*

**Ten virgins (1):** details of parables important. Not just "one basic message." Jesus teaches, e.g., details important in parable of the soils, seed, and sower.

10 - creation number. 10 words to create (Gen 1), new creation Israel (Ex 20), de-creation of old creation in Egypt (Exod 7-12). 10 virgins = a new creation people; people who have come into the church in the time between his life and destruction of Jerusalem.

Virgins - seem to represent the totality of the bride; washed and are coming to meet the bridegroom.

Image of Passover, exodus, and meeting YHWH at Mt. Sinai. Cleansed of harlotry through Passover and goes to Mt Sinai to become the bride of YHWH (Jer 31.31 ff.; Ezek 16)

**Lamps (1):** why? b/c it is dark. Important to interpretation of what time it is. It is still old creation time governed by the moon, moving from evening to morning (i.e., the *day* of the Lord).

Also Tab/Temple imagery. Lampstand = stylized almond (lit. "watcher") tree.

Household servants, the priests, had responsibility to keep lamps filled with oil and trimmed (cf. Ex 27.20-21; also 30.8). Associated with the worship of God's people.

Watcher - lampstand had 7 eyes that watched over the 12 loaves on the other side of the holy place. Jesus will end with the exhortation to "watch," personal preparation as well as care for those entrusted to them. This is priestly/worship duty.

**Five foolish, five wise (2-4):** foolishness and wisdom based upon preparation in light of the word of the bridegroom.

Not intellectual capabilities but how one responds to the word of YHWH. Cp. Mt 7.24-27.

Oil - fuel for the fire. Lights are to shine so that men see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father (Mt 5.15-16).

Primary reference of oil = the Holy Spirit. Look at Day of Pentecost where he lights up his people. Oil is received in worship. Filled with the Spirit when we sing to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph 5.18-19).

Neglect causes us to run short of oil. Cf. Heb 3, 10.

**Delay (5):** irresponsibility; they are excited and fail to plan, not taking seriously the word of the bridegroom.

Sleep here doesn't seem to be condemned. Preparation before sleep is what mattered.

#### 2. THE ARRIVAL OF THE BRIDEGROOM (6-10)

**The midnight cry (6):** image of Passover (Ex 12.29, 30); middle of the night a great cry goes out; anguish for the unprepared, a sign of deliverance for those prepared.

**An oil dilemma (7-9):** "Give us..." - more like a demand than a request, as if they are entitled.

Wise refuse. Is this selfish? No. Living for others doesn't mean enabling or encouraging sinful negligence.

Others, even within the church, can't be put under obligation by someone else's laziness and unwillingness to do the difficult task of preparation. If you live that way, eventually you will not be bailed out. There are some things that no one else can do for you.

Buying and selling = a liturgical image. cf. Isa 55.1; Rev 3.18. Exchanges of value go on in worship.

**While you were out (10):** door is shut - echos of Noah and the ark. Once the door is shut, those on the outside are in the place of punishment.

### **3. THE FOOLISH VIRGINS NOT ALLOWED INTO THE WEDDING (11-12)**

**Desperate plea (11):** they are being excluded from the kingdom b/c the kingdom = a feast.

**"I don't know you" (12):** know = a knowledge between husband and wife. They are not part of his bride.

### **4. "WATCH" (13)**

"Watch" here has the idea of being prepared. His disciples must continue to do everything necessary to be ready for the time of his coming when the kingdom comes as he promised.

They are to have the lamps of their bodies, their eyes, always looking. They are to be watching over that which was entrusted to them. They are to continue with one another in the breaking of bread, fellowship, and teaching, always being filled with the Spirit so that their lamps will be continually burning.

*1. Wisdom in preparation for the Lord's coming does not involve believing that he may come at any moment but preparing for the delay of his coming.*

*2. There are some preparations no one can make for you. You alone are responsible to make these preparations and, therefore, cannot expect others to bail you out.*