

## Lesson V.

## PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

February 3, 1901

Matt. 25: 1-13. Commit to memory vs. 10-13. Read

Matt. 23: 1-39; Mark 12: 41-44; Matt. 24: 1-25; 13.

1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

**Revised Version**—1 Margin torches; 2 Foolish, and five were wise; 3 For the foolish, when they took their lamps, took; 4 Now while; 5 But; 6 Omit made; 7 Omit cometh; 8 Come ye forth; 9 Going; 10 Peradventure there will not be enough; 11 Omit but; 12 Went away; 13 Marriage feast; 14 Omit wherein the Son of man cometh.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; it but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

## EXPLANATION

**Connection**—The Pharisees were now silenced, as we learned in our last lesson. (Matt. 22: 46.) They could answer nothing to the wisdom and truth-speaking of Jesus. He proceeds in ch. 23 to unmask and denounce their hypocrisy in righteous anger, which ended in a sad lament for their hardness of heart. He then leaves the temple, never to enter it again, foretelling as He goes out, its complete destruction. (24: 2.) On the Mount of Olives, on the way to Bethany, His disciples ask when these things are to be and when He should come again. In ch. 24 He tells them much, but gives no fixed date, but bids them watch. To this end the parable of the present lesson and of the one that follows are spoken.

1. Then; at the second coming of our Lord. (24: 42-44.) The kingdom of heaven; the kingdom over men's hearts and lives which Christ has established on earth. Shall be likened. His professed followers at His coming shall be like the virgins of the parable—some wise, some foolish. The number ten is used as a convenient number to express the whole number of Christ's followers. Took their lamps; small cups, or bowls, fastened securely to a long pole. The wick was bedded in pitch and fed with oil. Such lights or torches are still carried in the dark, narrow streets of many Asiatic towns. Went forth; from their homes, or from the bride's home. It was the custom for the bridegroom, accompanied by a friend (John 3: 29) and others, to go early in the evening in gay procession to the home of the bride, and later to escort her with lights, music and song to her future home. The virgins—the maiden friends of the bride and bridegroom—"went forth" from their waiting place by the way to meet him when returning.

2-4. Five of them. There seems to be no special significance in the number, nor in the fact of an equal division. The main point is that there was a division. Wise; prudent, foreseeing. Foolish; lacking prudence and foresight. Took their lamps. They had oil in them and they were burning. (V. 8, Rev. Ver., says "Our lamps are going out.") Took no oil; no extra supply. The wise took oil; an extra supply, showing their wise foresight. In their vessels; flasks carried for the purpose. The lamp in

the parable means our profession of Christ. The oil, the inward, spiritual life; the "oil in the vessels with the lamps;" true preparedness of heart, the inward, spiritual life full and strong.

5, 6. While the bridegroom tarried; as they waited for his coming. See on v. 1, Slept; both the wise and the unwise. They were all in a state in which they could not force His coming. But the wise were prepared. Our Lord tarries; we, too, should be ever ready. At midnight; an unexpected hour. (24: 44.) The bridegroom cometh. Christ is the Bridegroom who will come for His Bride, the Church (Rev. 21: 2, 9), at the Last Day. Go ye out; to welcome Him and go in with Him to the marriage feast.

7-9. Arose; awakened by the cry. Trimmed their lamps; by pouring in oil and trimming the wicks. Our lamps are going out (Rev. Ver.) The oil had burnt low while they were sleeping. This represents those who are content with professing Christ, who take no care to nourish the spiritual life within. Lest there be not enough; the wise could not give their oil. If we are not ready at the last day, not even our dearest friends can help us. Go to them that sell; that is, in the interpretation of the parable, to God (Rev. 3: 18), but He "sells" not; His grace is free.

10. While they went to buy. They went, but it was too late. They should have been supplied beforehand. They that were ready went in; to the marriage supper. The door was shut; the gate guarding the arched passage that led to the court around which an Oriental house was built. The door of salvation will be shut against all who are not ready at Christ's coming; and all who are ready will be shut in with Christ forever. (Rev. 3: 12.)

11-13. Lord, Lord, open to us; a piteous cry but unavailing. (See ch. 7: 22, 23.) I know you not; as privileged guests. Jesus "knows" those only who, sharing in His life, love and obey Him. It is blessedly true that Jesus "waiteth to be gracious" now. It is equally true that the day of mercy has an end. Watch therefore; the key-note of the parable. Ye know not the day nor the hour. Therefore, be always ready for the Lord's coming. It will be joy to those prepared and to none beside.