

V. 10. *The bridegroom came*; before the unprepared had been able to make ready.

III. The Door Shut, 10 (b)-13.

They that were ready went in; to go no more out forever (Rev. 3: 12), for the door was shut. Houses of the better sort in the East are built around a large square or court, upon which all the rooms of the house open. This court is reached by an arched passageway on one side of the house leading under the second storey. It was the gate guarding the passage that was shut, effectually barring all entrance. The unready are shut out, whilst the ready are shut in.

V. 11. *Afterward*. A sad untimeliness. *Lord, Lord, open unto us*. The repetition displays their agonizing earnestness. But the plea is unavailing. It is too late for prayer. (ch. 7: 22, 23.)

Vs. 12, 13. *I know you not*; Jesus the Bridegroom "knows" those only who know Him in watchful obedience. (John 10: 14.) *Watch therefore*; the keynote of the parable. Eternal vigilance is the price of safety. *Neither the day nor the hour*. The precise time of the coming of our Lord is unrevealed. (Ch. 24: 29, 30, 36-42; 1 Thess. 5: 2.) It is wise, therefore, to be always ready.

APPLICATION

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Ten virgins, which took their lamps, v. 1. This may well remind Christian people of their privileges. These virgins were invited to the marriage, torches were given them and they had opportunity both of serving the bridegroom and sharing in his joy. So, to the whole Christian world, the invitation has been given to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, and when He comes, to share His joy and do Him service. If we miss that service and that joy, we shall have only our own wilful folly to blame.

Five of them were wise, and five were foolish, v. 2. To a looker on, all the virgins must have seemed very much alike in appearance and conduct. Yet five were wise and five were foolish; five obtained an entrance into the marriage feast and five were shut out. And amongst those who make the same profession of Christ, a human eye may mark little difference. Only God, whose eye is all-seeing, discerns. But He discerns unerringly. He cannot be deceived.

They that were foolish . . . took no oil . . . but the wise took oil, vs. 3, 4. This is the difference between wisdom and folly. Folly lacks consideration, regards nothing beyond the moment, whilst wisdom looks to the future and provides for contingencies. Such wisdom and folly are exemplified in the religious life of men. I am invited to enter the Christian life. I am to light a torch which is not to be extinguished in a

few moments, but which is to be kept burning till the Master comes. In faith, and love, and obedience, I am to endure to the end. When Jesus comes, He is to find in me one who will help to adorn His triumph, a trophy of His grace, one who has been redeemed from sin and changed from a guilty rebel into a loving and loyal subject of the King. I am to contribute to His satisfaction when He sees of the travail of His soul. I must then ask myself, if I have that in me which will secure this endurance, this perseverance, and which will enable me to add lustre to His coming. It is evident that no outward connection with the Church, no superficial wave of religious emotion will suffice. There must be the work of God's Spirit in my heart, leading me to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, to sincere faith and willing obedience. This is to have oil in the vessel with the lamp.

They all slumbered and slept, v. 5. There is a necessary attention to the ordinary affairs of life which no Christian can avoid and which is not wrong. The bridegroom may come whilst one is sleeping, in this sense, and yet one may be ready for Him. In other words, sudden death may overtake one at his daily work; and if his heart be right with God, he will go to heaven as surely as if he had been stricken on his knees at prayer.

Give us of your oil, v. 8. There are many who would accept a substitute for personal

sent Jan, 12