

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the
Mission Field Worldwide.

THE TEN VIRGINS

(Matthew 25:1-13)

Jesus shared a powerful parable about ten virgins, teaching a lesson on spiritual preparedness that prompts introspection. Christ's second coming is compared to a wedding ceremony, where Jesus, the bridegroom, returns to receive His bride, the church. This parable is a call to vigilance and a warning to prepare for the return of Christ.

Ten virgins, each carrying lamps, went forth to meet the bridegroom. Five of these virgins are described as wise, while the other five are labeled foolish. The primary difference between the two groups was in their preparation: the wise virgins brought extra oil for their lamps, while the foolish ones did not. As they waited for the delayed bridegroom, the ten virgins grew tired and fell asleep. At midnight, a sudden cry rang out: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

Awakened, the virgins trimmed their lamps to ensure they would burn brightly. The foolish virgins realized their lamps had gone out due to a lack of oil. Panicked, they asked the wise virgins to share their oil. The wise virgins had only enough for themselves and advised the foolish to go and buy their own.

While the foolish virgins went to purchase oil, the bridegroom arrived. Those who were prepared—the wise virgins—entered the wedding feast with him, and the door was shut.

When the foolish virgins returned, they pleaded for entry, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." The bridegroom responded, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Jesus concluded the parable with a somber warning: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." This caution emphasizes the necessity of living in constant readiness for the return of Christ.

To correctly interpret the essence of this parable, it is essential to recognize that not every detail is meant to convey doctrinal truth. Parables are stories that communicate a central lesson, with certain details included to enhance understanding but not necessarily to symbolize specific truths. In this case, the ten virgins do not represent unbelievers but individuals who claim to be morally pure, unspotted from the world, and followers of God.

The division between the wise and foolish virgins is not meant to suggest that only fifty percent of professing Christians will be saved; rather, it serves as a wake-up call for all Christians to evaluate their spiritual condition. While the virgins were waiting, only the wise were prepared for the arrival of the bridegroom.



"At midnight, a sudden cry rang out: 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.'"

(continued on page 2)

Editorial

3

Bible Study:
Righteousness

4

Companion Article:
Robes of
Righteousness

5-6

Q & A

7

Did You Know?
A Word in Season:
Singing in Adversity

8

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

(continued from page 1)

As the bridegroom delayed, the virgins grew tired and fell asleep. This is similar to the spiritual fatigue and complacency that often sets in as Christians await Christ's return. The world is filled with cares, distractions, and temptations. The delay of Christ's coming can lead to carelessness in maintaining spiritual readiness. The foolish virgins, expecting the bridegroom to arrive sooner, did not adequately prepare and neglected to bring sufficient oil for their lamps. The oil symbolizes the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.



The wise virgins were prepared and carried sufficient oil to keep their lights burning. They had an active and genuine relationship with God, maintained through the Holy Spirit. Their faith was not merely outward with deeds of piety but was deeply rooted in the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit, which enabled them to shine in a dark world.

When the bridegroom arrived, the wise virgins were ready and were welcomed into the wedding feast. The marriage feast symbolizes the final union between Christ and His church at the end of time. Once the door was shut, there was no more opportunity for the foolish to enter. This represents the finality of judgment at Christ's return. When Jesus returns, there will be no time to pray, seek revival, be cleansed, or be empowered by the Spirit. There will be no second chances.

One of the most sobering aspects of the parable is the bridegroom's response to the foolish virgins: "I know you not." This reveals the danger of relying on outward appearances of faith without true spiritual substance. Though the foolish virgins seemed to be waiting for the bridegroom, they were not prepared and lacked the inward reality of a true relationship with God. They had a form of godliness but lacked the true fire of the Spirit of God.

Every believer should examine their spiritual readiness. Are you among the wise or the foolish? Do you have the oil of the Holy Spirit in your life, or are you relying on external religious practices? Oh, careless soul, awake from spiritual slumber and prepare for the return of the Lord.

The message is clear: watch and be ready, for no one knows when Christ will return. Now is the time to prepare. If you are not filled with the burning fire of the Holy Spirit in your life, do not delay. The door of opportunity is open today, but it will not remain open forever. When the final call comes, the door will be shut.

Are you ready to meet the bridegroom? Now is the time! ■

The *Gospel Truth* is a quarterly periodical published in the interest of the Church of God for instruction and encouragement in the truths of the Bible. Visit us online at www.thegospeltruth.org and subscribe to the email notification list to receive current publications. The *Gospel Truth* is printed in many countries for local distribution and is supported by free-will offerings. A tax receipt will be sent upon request.

—Editor, Michael Smith

Gospel Truth, P.O. Box 2042, Nixa, MO 65714 USA
editor@thegospeltruth.org

Editorial



Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.
—Proverbs 14:34

This scripture from Proverbs holds a great truth that goes beyond its theological meaning in the original Hebrew language. At face value, God favors and blesses nations and individuals who embrace righteousness and moral integrity. Conversely, sin is reprehensible and brings shame and a reproach to any people.

While we live in a world where sin is prevalent and unrighteousness is widespread, we can find hope in the divine grace that surpasses the power of sin.

The theme of this quarter is “Robes of Righteousness.” One time while on the mission field, I received a vision and a message about the “Bride of Christ.” This vision deepened my understanding of the Church as Christ’s bride, highlighting its beauty and purity in a greater light. My prayer is that this study will touch every reader and lead them to a greater understanding of true righteousness. May the Holy Spirit do what words cannot.

The Church, symbolized as a bride, is called to be pure, holy, chaste, and prepared for the Lord’s return. The Church is not an abstract concept but a body of believers. Thus, each believer is to be adorned with the righteousness of God. While there are debates about the definition of sin and worldly behavior, and there are criticisms of the Church’s standards of holiness, can we not pause and seek for a divine vision of Christ’s bride? Let us lay down, for just a little while, our ideas, opinions, preconceptions, and traditions and open our hearts and minds to the Word and Spirit as we seek for a greater revelation of righteousness.

What does God desire to do in our hearts and lives? If we are saved, we are part of His Church. In light of this, how should we live and conduct ourselves? Controversies often diminish when we view them through the lens of God’s righteousness. As the bride of Christ, our aim should be to please God and avoid actions and influences that are tainted with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

As we see the beauty of righteousness, there is a solemnity and a challenge for us to examine our lives and ensure they align with God’s holiness. We all have imperfections, but our goal should be to become more like Christ, allowing the Holy Spirit to shape and mold us. Just as a small impurity can taint a whole cup of water, a bit of unrighteousness can negatively affect our spirit.

May we see the purity of the bride and earnestly seek to live righteously and acceptably before God.

Michael W. Smith

October 2024



Visit us at

www.thegospeltruth.org

to subscribe and access

publication archives.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?

(1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10)

Fornicators

Adulterers

Thieves

Drunkards

Idolaters

Homosexuals

Covetous

Extortioners

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS



Bible Study Guide

Subject: Righteousness

Scripture Reading:

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.... She should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. —Revelation 19:7-8

Definition: Righteousness is “Acting in accord with divine or moral law. Free from guilt or sin” (*Merriam-Webster*). “The doctrine concerning the way in which man may attain a state approved of God. Integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting” (*Thayer*).

Summary: The Church is as a bride waiting on the coming of her bridegroom. She is to be adorned in white robes of righteousness. Children of God are to live righteous and godly lives, prepared for the return of Jesus Christ.

I. Bride of Christ

- A. Revelation 21:1-2 Adorned for her husband.
- B. Revelation 21:9-11 The Bride, the Lamb’s wife.
- C. Ephesians 5:25-27 Not having spot or wrinkle.
- D. 2 Corinthians 11:2 A chaste virgin.

II. White Raiment of the Saints

- A. Revelation 19:7-9 White linen is righteousness.
- B. Revelation 3:4-5 Clothed in white raiment.
- C. Revelation 7:9 Saints in Heaven in white robes.

III. Serve the Lord in Righteousness

- A. Luke 1:74-75 Serve God in righteousness.
- B. 1 John 3:6-8 Those who abide in Christ sin not.
- C. Romans 6:18-19 Servants of righteousness.
- D. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Works of unrighteousness.

IV. Call to Righteousness

- A. Matthew 6:33 Seek His righteousness.
- B. 1 Timothy 6:11 Follow after righteousness.
- C. Ephesians 4:24-25 Put on the new man.

V. By Faith and Not of the Law

- A. Galatians 2:16 Not justified by works of the law.
- B. Romans 5:1 Justified by faith.
- C. Romans 5:18-21 Righteous through Christ.

VI. Personal Righteousness Is Insufficient

- A. Philippians 3:7-9 Not personal righteousness.
- B. Romans 10:3-4 Establish their own righteousness.
- C. Isaiah 64:6 Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

- D. Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness.
- E. Matthew 5:20 Exceed that of the Pharisees.
- F. Matthew 23:27-28 Outward appearance.

VII. Exhortation of Righteousness

- A. 1 Corinthians 15:34 Awake to righteousness.
- B. 2 Timothy 3:16 Scripture is for instruction.
- C. Isaiah 28:17 Line and plummet.
- D. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Unrighteous shall not inherit.

VIII. Bride Contrasted With the Harlot

- A. Revelation 12:1 Woman clothed with the sun.
- B. Revelation 17:1-6 The great whore.
- C. Isaiah 1:21-22 Faithful city becomes an harlot.

IX. Promises to the Righteous

- A. 1 Peter 3:12 Ears open to their prayers.
- B. Acts 10:35 Accepted with God.
- C. 1 Peter 3:14 Happy are ye.
- D. Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they.
- E. 2 Timothy 4:7-8 A crown of righteousness.

X. Spotless Garments

- A. 2 Peter 3:10-11 What manner of persons.
- B. 2 Peter 3:14 Without spot, and blameless.

Conclusion

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
—1 John 1:9



ROBES OF Righteousness

The bridegroom entered the room and gazed upon his radiant bride, who had been waiting in eager anticipation to be united forever with the love of her life. Dressed in a pure white, flowing gown, free from any blemish, her face glowed as she welcomed her groom with joy. The long-awaited moment had finally arrived.

“The righteousness of the saints is made possible by the atoning work of the blood of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.”

Bride of Christ

John had a similar vision of the Church of God, symbolized as a bride prepared to meet her groom: “And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). This vision portrays the redeemed both as the beautiful city of Jerusalem and as a bride: “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (v. 9). Like a bride adorning herself to please her husband, the true Church seeks to please Christ alone. Christ loved the Church, His bride, so much that He gave His life to “sanctify and cleanse it...that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27). Paul spoke of the bride of Christ as a “chaste virgin” espoused to one husband, Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2).

May the Lord open the eyes of the blind so they may behold the true beauty of God’s one Church. Like a virgin bride, the Church should have allegiance to Christ alone and fix her eyes only on Him. Her desire should be to live and conduct herself in a manner worthy of the Son of God.

Marriage of the Lamb

The final union of Christ and the Church at the end of time is often depicted as a marriage. Revelation 19:7-8 captures the beauty of the bride: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” The bride, who

has made herself ready, is adorned in clean, white linen, symbolizing righteousness—purity, virtue, moral uprightness, and all that is right and just. Righteousness is the inner condition and behavior that is given and approved by God. Every individual believer must prepare themselves as the bride, living in a manner pleasing to God. The righteousness of the saints is made possible by the atoning work of the blood of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

Many professing Christians have stained their garments with sin and worldliness, but God’s true people are preparing themselves in purity and godliness. Those who overcome sin will be “clothed in white raiment” (Revelation 3:4-5), a symbol of purity and innocence. Only those who keep their spiritual garments clean on this earth will enter eternal glory, for only the pure will be in Heaven (Revelation 7:9).

Pure in Heart

Jesus came and sacrificed His life so that His people might serve Him in “holiness and righteousness” (Luke 1:75). True righteousness is not merely external but an inward purity of heart. God’s people must live in righteousness. 1 John 3:6-8 clearly teaches that those who abide in Christ do not live in sin, for Christ came to “destroy the works of the devil.” Believers are called to live as Christ lived—in righteousness. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness...now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Romans 6:18-19).

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

Call to Righteousness

Scripture repeatedly calls people to pursue righteousness over the fleeting pleasures of the world and the desires of the flesh. Jesus said to seek the “kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). Christians are urged to flee from sin and to “follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love...” (1 Timothy 6:11). Many people claim to follow Christ while living in sin and unrighteousness. Paul exhorts the Church in Ephesians 4:24-25 to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Righteousness comes only through God’s divine work and is lived out in everyday choices and decisions.

Paul’s message to the Church remains relevant today: “Awake to righteousness” (1 Corinthians 15:34). Many are spiritually asleep, allowing their garments to be contaminated by the world. Christians need discernment to know what is righteous and what is unrighteous. Scripture was given for “instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), yet many ignore God’s word, succumbing to the influences of this evil generation. Truth exposes the enemy’s deceptions, and judgment must be the line and righteousness the plummet (Isaiah 28:17) by which all things are measured.

The Bride and the Harlot

John’s visions in Revelation contrast two churches. In chapter 12, the true bride of Christ is depicted as being clothed with the sun, radiating truth and purity. In chapter 17, another type of woman is described, arrayed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious jewels. This woman, who had committed spiritual fornication, was called a harlot. She represents Babylon, a symbol of false Christian religions that, while proclaiming Christ as Lord, lives in unholiness and permits sin. She pollutes the pure doctrine of the Bible to appease the people. To which church do you belong—the one which is pure and spotless or the one that looks alluring with her fine speeches, programs, and charisma, yet tolerates sin and uncleanness?

Isaiah 1:21-22 exposes the children of Israel as once being a faithful city but having become a harlot. Though righteousness and judgment once dwelt within their walls, they began to mix idolatry and false doctrine with truth. Many professing Christians today are in a similar state, unfaithful to the bridegroom and no longer clothed in God’s righteousness.

Promises to the Righteous

To live clothed in robes of righteousness is a wonderful and blessed existence. Many promises are given for the righteous. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers” (1 Peter 3:12). “He that feareth him [the Lord], and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:35). “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye” (1 Peter 3:14). “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Most importantly, there is a crown of righteousness and eternal life in Heaven promised to those who have fought a good fight and lived according to God’s Word (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Exhortation to Righteousness

Jesus is coming soon, like a thief in the night. This earth will be destroyed, and all will stand before the judgment seat of God. Knowing this, and knowing that Christ is returning for a pure and holy people, “What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11). This call to holiness encompasses every area of life—our spirit, attitudes, ambitions, words, actions, things we listen to and watch, clothes we wear, places we visit, relationships, and even the doctrines we hold. Are these things aligned with righteousness in your life? Are they holy and pure? Do they reflect the chaste bride of Christ? Peter continues in verse 14: “Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

In what condition is your wedding garment? Are there wrinkles of worldliness or spots of sin? Are you adorning yourself to please Christ or to please yourself and those around you? It is possible to live a righteous life through the power of Jesus Christ.

If you are not adorned with the righteousness of God, submit yourself to God and ask for His divine work in your heart. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Let us live every day ready to meet Christ, for He is coming soon. ■



“This call to holiness encompasses every area of life—our spirit, attitudes, ambitions, words, actions...”



Question: Is someone considered righteous who keeps the doctrines of the Church?

This question goes to the heart of what true righteousness means. The apostle Paul often addressed this issue as he navigated the tensions between the Jewish Christians and newly converted Gentiles. Many Jews sought righteousness by adhering to rituals and commands of the Mosaic law.

“Righteousness is obtained through faith in the divine work of Christ, not by following a list of rules.”

Similarly, some people in the Church today look to rules and doctrines as the path to righteousness.

However, Paul makes it clear that true righteousness cannot be earned by our

actions. Galatians 2:16 states: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.... for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

In God’s plan, righteousness is obtained through faith in the divine work of Christ, not by following a list of rules. No matter how good those rules or doctrines might be, they cannot bring salvation. Justification—being declared “innocent” or “right”

before God—does not come from our own efforts. Rather, we are made righteous by faith, for righteousness is more a condition of the heart than of external actions.

People may pray, sacrifice, praise, give, dress modestly, and do other good deeds, but these actions alone cannot change the condition of the heart. Even someone who does not believe in God can perform those acts. It is only through a divine work of God that one can truly be made “right” in His sight. Romans 5:1 teaches us, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Later in Romans 5:18-21, Paul explains that through Christ’s obedience many were made righteous. This righteousness is a transformation of the heart that comes through the power of the blood and the work of the Holy Spirit.

While good works and obedience to God’s Word naturally flow from a transformed heart, these actions themselves do not bring the righteousness of God; rather, they are the fruit of righteousness, not its root.

In balance, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of good works. A person clothed in God’s righteousness will seek to glorify Him in daily life, walking in holiness and pursuing continual growth in the graces of Christ. However, we must be careful not to depend on these works as the basis for our standing with God.

Righteousness is not achieved by merely keeping the doctrines of the Church. It comes through faith in the transforming power of Christ, which then leads to good works flowing from a righteous heart.



“All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” — Isaiah

“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” —Jesus

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.” — Paul

“Ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” —Jesus

“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness.” —Paul



DID YOU KNOW?

Studies suggest that adherence to moral and spiritual practices can positively impact mental health, reducing stress and promoting overall well-being. Individuals who engage in regular religious or spiritual practices often report lower levels of stress and better health outcomes. [Koenig, Harold G. Religion, Spirituality, and Health. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, 2008]



A Word
in Season

SINGING IN ADVERSITY

At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. — Acts 16:25

While on a missionary journey, doing the work of God, Paul and Silas were taken, stripped, beaten with many stripes, and cast into prison. At midnight, in the inner prison with their feet held fast in the stocks, these bloodied men prayed and then began to sing praises to God.



There was a great earthquake; the prison doors opened up, and the prisoners were free. While a wonderful miracle took place that night, these brethren were singing in their tribulation *before* their deliverance came. May the Lord help us to find that secret place in our relationship with Him where we also can sing despite the troubles of life.

[The writing below is paraphrased from an article written by C. W. Naylor in *Secret of the Singing Heart*.]

Life is filled with adversity, pain, and disappointment. If we wait for a life free of problems to be happy, we will find little joy. True happiness doesn't come from ease or a lack of obstacles, but from overcoming them. Often, true joy comes from souls that endure many challenges.

In 2 Corinthians 7:4, Paul writes, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." The Psalmist also acknowledges this, saying, "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities" (Psalm 31:7). Knowing God is present during hardship brings peace.

Jesus is aware of all your struggles—every heartache and difficulty. Trust in His grace, and soon, your heart will again be filled with melody, for the clouds will pass away.

Adversity teaches us a new kind of song, one that requires both courage and trust. These are songs of confidence, trust, and hope for future victories. They are songs of gratitude for God's past mercies. While harder to learn, these songs can bring more profound joy than those sung during prosperous times, as they arise from deeper faith. No matter how many trials we face, if we trust in God, we can still sing a song during adversity. ■

Contact

The Gospel Truth
P. O. Box 2042
Nixa, MO 65714
USA

Email:
editor@thegospeltruth.org

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

