

Matthew 25:1-13 “The Fate of the Unprepared”

5.6.18

What are you looking forward to? Vacation? Graduation? Promotion? Retirement? Marriage? What is it that you are really excited about that’s coming up in your life. Think about it. Let that thing roll around in your brain.

You know I’ve come to understand that a big part of the joy of future events, whatever they might be...is just the anticipation of them and the planning for them. It’s a joy just thinking about a vacation, for instance...which is where I’ll be next weekend! Just the excitement of looking forward to it is a lot of the enjoyment!

Let me ask you this today...are you looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ? Now, I know the easy answer is yes... But, can we be honest today and admit, that the Return of Jesus is NOT something that we think about often. I mean...we know it’s coming and we know that according to Scripture, Jesus could return in the air at any moment...in the twinkling of an eye...but, do we really think much about heaven? Do we really ponder that often what it would be like to leave this earth and shoot right through the stratosphere and meet Jesus in the air?

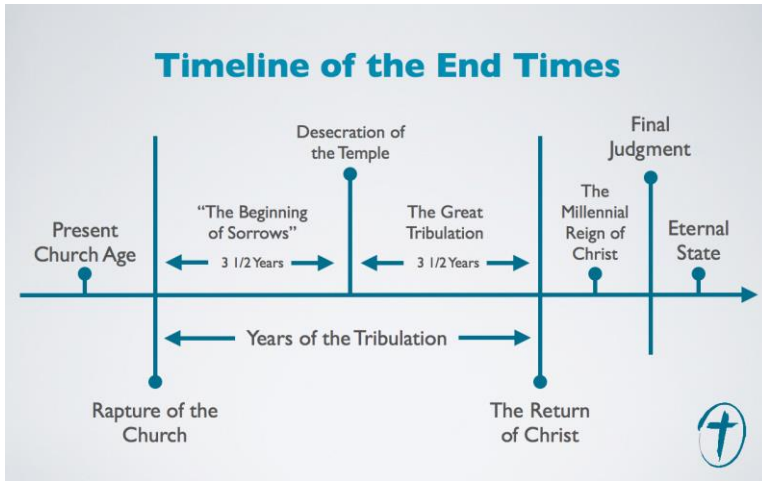
Yes, if I’m honest, It seems we can get pretty earth bound doesn't it? Yes, we know we are to store up treasures in heaven and look forward to the return of Jesus...but, so often we don’t. **And might that be why we struggle so much on this side of heaven?** Might it be that we are so focused on the stuff of this earth that the STUFF OF THIS EARTH can keep us from experiencing the joy that Jesus wants to bring into our lives?

This morning we are going to talk about: “The Fate of the Unprepared.” We are going to look at a first century wedding and we’re going to see 5 ladies who were ready and prepared for the wedding and 5 who weren’t.

Matthew 25:1-13

¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. ⁶But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ ⁷Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ ⁹But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ ¹²But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

This morning we return to our study of the book of Matthew and Jesus’ teaching from the Mount of Olives, called the “Olivet Discourse.” Jesus has been describing the period of time that will occur on this earth after the Rapture... See our timeline...



This is the Tribulation Period, or "The Time

of Jacob's Trouble."

Remember the scene...it is Tuesday evening...



...Jesus has been teaching His disciples on the Mount of Olives. These disciples are primarily Jews, who have given their lives to Christ and Jesus is teaching to them what is going to take place when He returns to this earth and keeps His promise to the nation of Israel in that He will rule and reign from Jerusalem, in the Temple, for 1,000 years (Millennial Kingdom). And truly, the description of these events has been mindboggling.

Jesus has described the coming of a man...the Antichrist, who will lead people astray with a false peace and then he will turn on them and require the inhabitants of the earth to take his mark (666) as he unveils an image of himself in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem and say, "Worship me." And that event will be what unleashes the wrath of God on him and all those who take his mark.

And so Jesus in Matt 24-25 is offering warnings. Last week, He reminded them about Noah...



...and the flood that came, and how the people refused to listen to Noah and were destroyed in the flood. And today, we'll see Jesus use a first century wedding and some bridesmaid's to offer a second warning to BE PREPARED!

Matthew 25:1

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

First century weddings were much different than our weddings today. In fact the whole idea of what it means to even arrive to the wedding day in the first century was much, much different than the way we typically arrive to our wedding days today.

And we see this in verse 1 by way of the use of the word "virgin." You see, there was an expectation by the culture in that day men and women were to arrive to their wedding day as virgins. The word virgin in the Greek is: Parthenos. It means male or female "sexual purity." You remember, Jesus was born of a virgin...that was Mary, but Joseph was expected to be a virgin too! Listen, dads were to protect their daughters and sons and see to it that they arrived to their wedding day as virgins.

In fact, it was consummation that was the declaration that a marriage had taken place. You see, in the Bible, there wasn't a preacher who said, "Now I pronounce you man and wife." You won't find that in Scripture. What you find is a couple who would declare allegiance to one another publicly and then the young man would take his bride to the home he had prepared for them and consummation would take place in that home.

Here's the process: The young man...the bridegroom, would go and ask for the hand of the young lady via her father. If the father saw that the young man had the ability to care for her and provide for her, then he would give the affirmative and allow the young man to pursue his daughter, if his daughter so desired. Literally the father of the potential bride had to know that the young man could pay the Bride's price...meaning the father had to know the young man could provide for his daughter. **Eventually, if all went well**, the young man would begin preparing a place for he and his bride, if permission was granted...a place for them to live **after** the wedding. Cohabitation is unknown in the Bible.

Let me say it again Jesus has paid the Bride's Price and right now He is prepraing a place for us His Bride...the church...and when it's ready...He's going to Rapture the Church off the earth and we'll go to heaven for the wedding and the marriage supper!

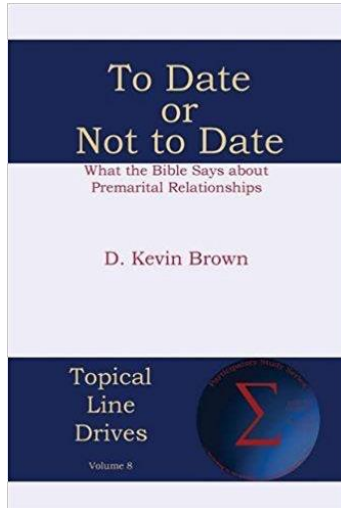


I love this painting that depicts that scene! Jesus said, "I go and prepare a place for you..." Jesus is making the preparations for us now!

However, I must tell you, I am afraid we know almost nothing of Biblical marriages today. Far too often I believe we are disregarding Solomon's warning, not to "awken love to soon." And yet, we have kids dating each other at such young ages and they're still trying to figure out who they are.

And because of this...so often, our young people end up at the wedding altar bruised and scarred because of too many relationships that came too fast, because they awakened love too soon.

I've written about this whole concept in a book... several years ago...



“To Date or Not to Date, What the Bible Says about Premarital Relationships.” It’s a short read. You can read it in about 45 minutes. It’s simply a pamphlet that gives young families and parents what I call a: “Gold Medal View” like Olympic athletes who pursue the gold medal of how to place a premium on a young person’s character, their purity and the pursuit of Christian holiness.

The point is this...first century weddings involved virgins...that’s point. Yet, our culture and unfortunately, even many Christian families, no longer have this as the ultimate goal. But, it should be. Oh how I wish we stop crossing our fingers and hoping it all works out and start pointing to the Biblical model. Listen, I’m convinced, if we will show our children from the time they are little the gold medal...they will shoot for that! They will rise to the level of our expectations!

So, a first century groom would finally reach the point of completing the home for his bride, and he would then go to the bride’s home, (where she still lived with her mother and father), and then there would be a grand processional to their new home. Often times this processional took place at night...when everyone was finished working...thus the need for lamps or torches to light the way. And now we’ll see these 5 wise and 5 foolish virgins. **See verse 1 again and watch this unfold.**

Matthew 25:1-6

¹“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.⁵As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.⁶But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’”

I want you to take a look at this depiction of these 10 ladies.



5 were ready and 5 weren't. Now again, keep in mind, Jesus is teaching about the Tribulation period... The point He is making: **Be ready!** Don't be caught off guard when I return! Apparently word had gotten to the 10 virgins earlier in the evening that the groom was coming, but when we was delayed, (all the way up to midnight), and by then, 5 of the virgins lamps had almost burned out...and they had no oil...they weren't ready. They had not taken any extra provisions... I believe this is how they might have looked...



...see that look: **OH NO!!!!** The reality: I've made no provision! They were only thinking of NOW...the immediate... **And that's what can happen to us.** We get thinking only about the things of this earth and we don't think about the things of God. We live like those in the days of Noah, going about our everyday lives and never thinking about the return of Jesus. The bridegroom is at the door...wake up...

Matthew 25:7-9

⁷ Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹ But the wise answered, saying, 'Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'

It was too late! Church, do you know the oil is? It's salvation. The oil is always represented in Scripture as salvation. Five were ready, five weren't. And isn't it interesting Jesus chose the number 5. Five of the 10 weren't ready. He could have chosen 1 or 2 or 3 of the virgins, but He chose 5. Now, I don't want to read too much into this or over exegete the passage, but Jesus described the fact that 50%, half of those ladies weren't prepared. If I'm honest with you today and I look at the Church as a whole in America...I would say that % is probably pretty accurate. When Jesus returns, there will be a lot of people who go to church and profess to be followers of Christ, who will not be entering heaven. Just like these five ladies who weren't ready.

So, what did they do? They begged the other five to give them some of their oil... But, the 5 who were prepared said, "No way...there won't be enough for us to get to the Groom's house...go get your own." But, folks it's midnight...it's too late! And so, off they go to try to rouse up some of the merchants...

Matthew 25:10-12

¹⁰ And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. ¹¹ Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' ¹² But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

Oh listen Church family, the oil cannot be bought when the market is closed and there is no bidding when the auction is finished. Matthew Henry, the great Bible Commentator from the 1700's said it this way:

“The worthless confidence of hypocrites will take them far in their expectations of happiness: they go all the way to the gates of heaven and demand entrance; yet they are shut out.” Matthew Henry, Bible Commentator (circa 1708)

You see, there are those who think they can time this thing out with Jesus...they can wait to the last minute and still get in... But, Jesus said... “No way!” **Look at verse 13**...I don't want you to miss something...

Matthew 25:13

¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

Jesus was clear to His disciples on the Mount of Olives...see the picture again...



...Jesus, as He was pointing back to the Temple, said, “No, you will not be able to calculate when I come back to this place and begin my reign in that hill...”

You say, “Wait a minute, can't those people living during the Tribulation Period...just count the days... It's going to be seven years, right? So, they can calculate it!!!!” No they can't and here's why... Jesus said as much in Matthew 24 verses 21-22. You see, right after the Antichrist unveils the statue of himself in the Temple...the abomination of desolation, Jesus said this:

Matthew 24:21-22

²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. ²² And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Did you know that? In Jesus' mercy He is going to shorten those days. By how much? A day two days? How about 36 hours? Jesus said:

Matthew 25:13

¹³ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

You don't know the hour. You know what I think... There will actually be people who will try to wait right up to the hour of Jesus' return before they will repent. Oh...but, they will be like the 5 foolish virgins who wasted all the oil thinking they had time. But, the bridegroom came when they least expected Him...

Are you ready? Are you prepared? Yes, this passage is a description of the Tribulation Period, spoken primarily to the nation of Israel in the season and time of "Jacob's Trouble," but the principle applies to us, the Church, prior to the Rapture...which could happen at any moment. The principle: Be ready...be prepared...Be watching... Be living for Him... Do your duty... Be Ready!

And if you are...and He comes this afternoon...you will rejoice! But, if not, you will mourn His return! For me: I'm ready and I'm ready for the wedding in Heaven... and I'm looking a lot more forward to that than a vacation! Oh the joy that it will be to be in the presence of Jesus in heaven!
