

Matthew 25:1-13

“The King’s Return Anticipated”

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Intro. Knowing that you have eternal life, and why you have it, can give you peace, joy, love and hope that is different than the atheist who doesn’t believe in God, heaven, or hell. And is different than the misguided experience of the person who assumes everyone goes to heaven, but has no meaningful reason why. But can you know that you have eternal life. Today, we will discover how to be sure of your salvation ...

Subject: The parable of the wise and foolish virgins

Object: Know you have eternal life

Context: Olivet Discourse and Jesus’ answers to the disciples’ questions about when will He return, and what will be the sign of His Coming [i.e. When will you establish your reign]? After sharing several signs [Matt.24], Jesus shares parables to encourage us to be ready and remain faithful.

A. Be sure of your salvation [Matt. 25:1-13]

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ² Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. ³ Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶ “And at midnight a cry was *heard*: Behold, the bridegroom is coming go out to meet him!’ ⁷ Then all those virgins arose 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, ‘*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. ¹¹ “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ ¹² But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ ¹³ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

In Jesus’ day, a groom would leave his home and go with his close friends to the brides’ home. The exact time of his arrival was unknown. When he arrived, there would be a wedding ceremony, including a sacred covenant, followed by a procession at night to the groom’s home for a week-long feast. All in the procession would carry their own lamp or torch. The bridegroom [1] is Jesus [2Cor. 11:2, Mt. 9:15, Hos. 2:19]. The ten virgins (bridesmaids) represent those who claim to be followers of Christ [10]. Five are wise and five are foolish [2]. The contrast between the wise and foolish is that the wise have oil in their lamps and the foolish do not [3-4]. What does the oil represent? Oil is a symbol of the presence of God’s Spirit [Ex.30:30-32, Lu. 4:18, Ac. 10:38]. The groom’s delay [5] represents the Church age (about 2,000 years since Pentecost [Mt. 24:48, 25:19]). During the delay, they all slept [5].

At midnight, there was an unexpected dramatic call to go meet the groom [6]. When Jesus returns, it will be unexpected. So, we are exhorted to be ready [Matt. 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13]. All awake to prepare their lamps [7]. The wise are unable to help the foolish by giving them their oil [8]. In the same way, you can't give the Holy Spirit to another. You can encourage, and be an example, but

each one needs to receive their own spiritual birth from Christ [Jn. 3:1-8]. In the parable, the wise exhort the foolish to buy oil for themselves [9]. In other words, each person needs to get their own oil or salvation. However, we can't buy salvation it is a gift from God by grace through faith in Christ. We simply need to ask our Heavenly Father [Lu.11:11-13]. Those who were wise had oil, or were saved, and entered the wedding [10]. The wedding feast is a picture of the Messianic Banquet scene used to describe eternity with God. The wedding is a picture of joy, blessing and true believers' covenant union with Christ [Eph. 5:27, Rev. 19.6-9]. Then the door was shut [10]. Then the unwise sought to enter [11] saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But the Lord replies [12], "Truly I don't know you." Only true believers enter eternity with Christ [Matt. 7:21-23, Jn. 10:14]. True believers are distinguished from false. True believers enjoy Jesus for eternity and those who rejected God's gospel will experience judgment for eternity. Once Christ returns, or when you leave earth by death, there is no opportunity to change your position regarding Jesus and His gospel [Lu. 16:19-31]. Jesus concludes with the exhortation to, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" [13]. [Jesus warns professing believers, who may think that they are saved but aren't, and encourages all to be ready for His return. A vibrant spiritual life, where you learn from, yield to, and live for Jesus is the best way to be ready.](#) As we see the alignment between world events and biblical prophecy regarding the Second Coming we must live in anticipation of His return and the eternal consequences related to our relationship or lack of relationship with Jesus.

B. How you can know that you are saved [1Jn. 5:13] "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life ..." You can have assurance of your salvation, and if really saved you cannot lose your salvation.

What are these things [i.e. 1 Jn. 1:1-5:12]?

1. Jesus' followers walk in the light as Christ does, confess their sin, repent and receive His forgiveness and righteousness. They yield to God's authority [1:1-10]. I love the experience of feeling God's conviction (not shame or mere guilt) when I'm proud, self-righteous, selfish, judgmental. I love that when I have lied, I feel the weight that it is wrong before God, and I'm compelled to repent, and confess. And I know that I'm forgiven because of what Jesus has done, and my earnest desire to yield my life to Him.

2. They obey His commands and love one another [2:1-11]. First, I need to desire to know God's word, because His Word reveals Him, and what He desires and requires from me. Then, I need to obey. There are certain commands that seem to come easier and others that are more challenging to each of us. When I recently read in 1Sam 15:22 that God desires obedience more than sacrifice, I was convicted that it wasn't until relatively recently that I really sought to live the Great Commandment to love my neighbors like myself.

Loving others requires me to sacrifice my time, affections, and put others ahead of myself – especially people that I’m not naturally drawn to, or that might even be irritating to me. And I want to do it, not because I’m a pastor and it’s the right thing for a pastor to do, but because I’m a follower of Jesus and it is necessary for me to know I’m truly Christ’s.

3. They stop loving the world [2:12-17]. This is a challenge generally for people like us who live in a place like this. Even in a developing country, with abject poverty, you can long for possessions and material pleasure to be your hope and deliverer. For most of us, we love this world far more than we should. Our access to material comforts can be a blessing from God, and a temptation to drift from Him. Most of us have plenty to eat, comfortable (maybe even luxurious) shelter, and can engage in plenty of recreation and partake of plenty of entertainment. For me, the test is always, “How does this material experience impact my relationship with Christ?” I don’t want this world to impinge on Christ, and when it does, I need to say “no” to this world to know that I’ve said “yes” to Christ. When there is no time to read the Bible, pray, worship together and scatter together in groups, serve and give, the root problem is likely love for this world.

4. They know and discern truth (about God) [2:18-29]. True believers discern truth so that they are not deceived by false religions or philosophies that are contrary to Christ and His gospel. Christ’s disciples want to learn and understand the Bible, and theology. And their familiarity with Christ, His Word and Spirit help them to discern spiritual truth. How would you describe your appetite for the Word of God?

5. True believers seek to live a holy life (repent of sin) [3:1-9]. True believers experience a lifelong process of growing in practical sanctification, and thus they deal with their sin. On the other hand, the self-righteous can discern other people’s sins, while neglecting to repent of their own. When was the last time you repented?

6. Christ’s followers love one another in community and sacrificially care for the needs of the vulnerable. Their love is characterized by actions more than merely words [3:10-23]. In our culture, we regard “righteousness” as not breaking the rules, and “justice” as punishing those who break the rules. In the Bible, those concepts are very different. A righteous person is one who is in a right loving relationship with God, their neighbors, a community of faith, and God’s creation. A just person, puts the needs of others before their own, and cares for others especially the vulnerable (e.g. the poor, widow, orphan, and stranger). The just sacrifice for the sake of others, and Jesus is the example. The reason to be just is to follow Jesus. Thus, injustice lives for self and personal comfort and convenience.

I recently invited a homeless person to join me for lunch (more than simply offering to buy lunch), and I’m confessing that this was the first time I’ve ever done this. I recently noticed that I had not seen my older neighbor Phyllis for a few days, and I was concerned and checked-in, and it felt great because I knew it was God, because it is not my fleshly nature. How are you living in authentic community with others (e.g. Neighborhood Group), and sacrificially caring for the vulnerable?

7. They discern false teachers and messengers [4:1-6], and continue to love one another [7-20]. The enduring pursuit of Christ, and rejection of legalism and liberalism joined with genuine love and

community with others, especially those you would not naturally be drawn to, helps to ensure your salvation.

8. They love God, obey His commands, and put their faith in Christ and His gospel [5:1-12].

Today, you can know that you have eternal life with Christ. You are saved by grace through faith in what Christ has done at the cross. You respond to God's love through faith in Christ characterized by love for God.

You know that you have received salvation by a vibrant spiritual life, where you learn from, yield to, live for Jesus, and experience ongoing transformation and progress. And there is nothing in this world that can compare to the love, peace, hope, and joy of eternal life in Christ today and always.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Why might some people think that they are saved when they truly are not?

Q2. What are some of the characteristics of a vibrant spiritual life that are important to you?

Q3. Review the list of 8 traits described in the section "How you can know that you are saved" from 1 Jn. 1:1-5:12. Describe some of the areas where you have made progress and some of the areas where you would like to be transformed.

Q4. How does knowing that you have eternal life provide you peace, joy, love and hope that is different than the atheist who doesn't believe in God, heaven, or hell?