

A Tale of 10 Virgins

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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. 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: 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.

Matthew 25:1-13, KJV

Lamps are indicative of many things in Scripture. Lamps are used metaphorically throughout Scripture. Lamps and light indicate life,

But Abishai the son of Zeruah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

2 Samuel 21:17, KJV

The word of God is a lamp,

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalms 119:105, KJV

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

Proverbs 6:23, KJV

Well being is a lamp,

The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Proverbs 13:9, KJV

I think the real image here is one Jesus had used earlier in His ministry

¹⁴ Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16, KJV

All ten showed signs of faith. They all went to church. They all claimed to believe and serve. All had lamps that worked, but only five had reserves. Five were living a lie. Five loved God and so fed on His word and were supplied with the oil of His Spirit (see verse 4). Five relied on their own small reserve of deeds to look good and make others think they were God's servants, when in fact they were just going through the motions (see verse 3). Note that they did not think they deserved Hell, but they were not relying on God to get them to heaven. It is not our opinion that gets us to heaven

²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matthew 7:21-23, KJV

It is not merely confessing with our mouth

⁶ But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) ⁷ Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) ⁸ But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; ⁹ That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Romans 10:6-11, KJV

The passage starts with a statement of humbling ourselves before God because we are unable in ourselves. That is what the foolish did not do, they relied on their own insufficient lamps. And then it says to believe and confess. The word for confession means to agree, to concede, to assent to the truth of something. Note that mouth is figurative just like heart is. We do not need to speak to be saved lest we think the mute cannot be saved. The heart pumps blood, it does not believe. The heart represents the center of faith. The mouth in similar fashion lets us know it is not merely an intellectual abstract agreement, it must play out in our lives. Notice as a capstone verse 11 tells us belief, not action, is what saves. Those who believe are saved and act, but the actions do not save.

In verse 2, wise and foolish does not carry the full weight of the original words. "Wise" in this case is not *sophos* - knowledge tempered by experience, skill, or experience. "Wise" in this case is also not *sunetos* - insight, comprehension, the ability to "put things together." "Wise" is *phronemos* - prudence or correct perception of the situation. The five are not *phronemos* because of natural talent but because God's word revealed the truth and they embraced it. Similarly the word for foolish, *moros*, actually has a secondary meaning, which is impiety or godlessness. The root of *moros* is most likely the word *muo*, to be hidden, the truth of God was veiled to them. they could not see the truth before them.

Consider verses 5 and 6. They all slept. Recall what Christ said,

³³ Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ³⁴ For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. ³⁵ Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: ³⁶ Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. ³⁷ And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Mark 13:33-37, KJV

Note that the sleeping did not negate the salvation of the five. We should not sleep spiritually, but it is not for salvation, but for God's glory.