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The Ten Maidens

Matthew 25:1-13

The closing days of Jesus' ministry, centering around the temple in Jerusalem, were days of conflict with the religious leaders. This Jerusalem would be destroyed, Jesus said. His disciples pointed out the solid grandeur of the structure; yet the temple, Jesus declared, would be demolished.

They talked of the coming again of Jesus from Heaven, and the end of the world. Matthew gives two chapters - 24 and 25 - to the discussion that followed. As to the time of the Lords' return, He was most clear: no one knows!

Matthew then records four of Jesus' parables, all dealing with the disciples' need to be faithful and ready for the Lord's return. It is one of those parables, the parable of the ten maidens or virgins that we study in this lesson.

1. Describe what you know about wedding customs among the Hebrews and how they differed from such customs in our country.

2. To what time period does the "then" refer? (See Matthew 24:3). What do the ten virgins or maidens represent?

3. Read v. 2-4. What was the fundamental difference between the five wise and the five foolish virgins?

4. Read v. 5. What teaching about the second coming of Jesus does the bridegroom's delay represent? Was it the *sleeping* that was the problem with these women or was it the unpreparedness?

5. Read v. 6. Can you imagine any "second coming" significance to the *midnight* arrival of the bridegroom? Compare 2 Peter 3:3-10.

6. Read v. 7. The wise maidens were able to adjust their lamps quickly and be ready. Is there a lesson for us in this?

7. Read v. 8. It is a characteristic of immature, thoughtless, selfish, or desperate people, when they get into trouble, to expect their families, friends, the government, or the church to bail them out. Do you see that characteristic in these women? (Seen hanging on the wall of a paralegal: "Lack of planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.")

8. Read v. 9. What justification did the wise women have for saying "no"? Was this a right response? Do you suppose they incurred the wrath of the foolish women? Someone has said, "No one has a fund of surplus piety that can be turned over to another." Could the five wise women have helped out anyway?

9. Read v. 10. Do you suppose these “last minute maidens” spent more time and probably more money in their search than would have been necessary earlier? Can you think of a time when a similar lack of preparedness caused you to panic? Did their last minute efforts do them any good? What does this say of the practice of some where conversion is postponed until sometime later in life?

10. Read v. 11-12. The girls who arrived late were not only refused admission, they were treated as strangers. Read Matthew 7:21-23. What is the lesson (and warning) here for us?

11. Read v. 13. Compare Matthew 24:42. What should be said about those who continue even today to attempt to fix the time of Christ’s return? What is the warning of this parable to all of us?

12. What are some things we should be doing to be sure we are prepared for Christ’s return? Would you be ready if Christ returned this very moment?