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Is Oil Really Important?

Matthew 25:8-9: (NKJV) *"⁸And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹But 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.'"*



Mention oil and you probably get a reaction. In our world, oil is one of those commodities that drive our society - its price and availability can have a great impact on how we live our lives. Our subject is oil - but not in the sense that you may think. No, rather than dealing with the "crude" kind, we are going to talk about a much more refined kind - the kind you would have put in a lamp in ancient days. In Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins, oil plays a key role. So, what does it represent? How does it project our being "wise" or "foolish?"

Questions for consideration:

1. Why did Jesus teach this particular parable?
2. What did the symbols of the parable represent?
3. What is the bottom line difference between the "wise" and the "foolish"?

1. Why did Jesus teach this particular parable?

Matthew 25:1-13: This parable comes on the heels of Jesus' Great Prophecy - Matthew 24. In it, Jesus answers three questions posed to him by his Disciples in Matthew 24:1-3: He is talking about the destruction of the Temple. The first question they have for him is: when will this destruction take place? The second question is: what will be the sign of your coming? (Note, this word actually means "presence" or "alongside of" in the Greek.) The third question asked is: what will be the sign of the end of the age? His followers wanted to know about extraordinary future events, and these are important questions. Jesus obliged them by giving the complex prophecy in Matthew 24.

Interestingly, Jesus himself did not know all the details of these future events. Jesus is telling them about what he knows, which was very difficult for them to grasp.

Through prophecy, Jesus knew there would be a long time until some of these things would happen: Mark 13:32 and Habakkuk 2:1-3: The Habakkuk quote is a prophecy of Christians being able to understand the chain of events that happened bringing us to the time of Jesus' return. The thought in the Hebrew is: though it will take a long time; wait for it, because it will not be delayed. Be patient, it will be right on time - even though it will seem too long for us!

From the perspective of Jesus dealing with his followers at that time, here are men that have dedicated their lives to him. They are learning from him on an everyday basis and now he is going to be leaving. He knows that they need deep encouragement to carry them through.

He spent a lot of time assuring them he would be coming back. John 14:1:3: What they didn't understand was the difficulty, stress and pressure they would be under during Jesus' absence. Jesus is telling his followers that they need to be prepared for his absence. It would be longer than they would want it to be, so he was giving them these words to encourage them.

The complexity of future events surrounding his return - combined with the many years before their fulfillment - gave cause for Jesus to teach this parable. It would help prepare his followers and their followers for the long journey as they awaited his return. They would be waiting a long time.

Why was the return so veiled? From whom was God protecting that information? Matthew 24:42-44: Satan! In this parable, Satan is the master of the house and Jesus is the thief. This sounds backwards, but whose world is this? Satan is the prince of this world, and Jesus comes



to take it from him. God veils the time of his return so that Satan doesn't know when it will be. Jesus kept the urgency for his followers. Telling them it was coming 2,000 years later would have discouraged them, and they would have given up.

Jesus begins this parable as he began so many others: Matthew 25:1: What does he mean by "the Kingdom of Heaven" or in some cases "the Kingdom of God?"

First, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God are the same. He uses both phrases here: Mathew 19:23-24. Second, the Kingdom of Heaven/God has revealed itself already: Matthew 4:17 and Luke 17:20-21. Third, the Kingdom of Heaven/God is not a finished product, but in fact it is a project under construction: Matthew 13:24-26: The Kingdom of Heaven is like this man that sowed good seed but there was also bad seed planted. There is trouble! Matthew 13:31-33: Symbolically, birds in parables represent unclean things. In the other parable, leaven represents sin, which is something that needs to be cleaned out from your household. There is difficulty surrounding this Kingdom of Heaven.

So, when Jesus says "**the Kingdom of God (Heaven) is like**" in his parables, he seems to be saying something like: "The Kingdom of Heaven is the context of difficulty in which my true followers are to be developing their characters to be like mine and their lives to be lives of sacrifice like mine."

Observations so far:

- This parable was to alert Jesus' followers to the long wait ahead of them, to teach them to be patient.
- It was pointing towards his return.
- It was focusing them on being faithful in uncertainty.
- It was showing them (as all his parables did) about their necessary growth - they had to change and grow up spiritually.



2. What did the symbols of the parable represent?

There are four primary symbols:

- 1: Ten Virgins (true followers of Christ)
- 2: Bridegroom (Jesus)
- 3: Lamps (God's holy word to mankind - the Bible)
- 4: Oil (Holy Spirit - the influence of God)

■ 1: Ten Virgins 2 Corinthians 11:1-4: The Apostle Paul was concerned about the Christians in Corinth, because they were wavering with all sorts of issues. **A virgin was to be chaste and betrothed to Christ.** Romans 7:4: and Ephesians 5:27: The ten virgins would then represent the true followers of Christ. The scriptures above round it out for us.

■ 2: Bridegroom 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Revelation 19:7 and Revelation 19:9: Jesus is the bridegroom.

■ 3: Lamps See: Psalms 119:105, Psalms 43:3, John 17:17, Proverbs 6:23, 2 Peter 1:19-21: The prophetic word is something that is sacred and is a light that shines in a dark place. Each of the ten virgins had a lamp in their hands, so the true followers of Christ has the word of God, which is the light that lights their way. It is a wonderful picture that each of us is given the opportunity to have the Book to show us how to live our lives and teach us what things are important.

■ 4: Oil What did the possession of this oil do for the bridesmaids?

- Helped them see
- Helped them to be seen
- Gave them staying power
- Showed preparedness and foresight - they were ready!
- Gave them entrance into the banquet



Psalms 45:7: When anointing with oil, the oil is poured over their head and covers them.
Exodus 30:25-32: The anointing oil in the Old Testament was very different from other oils. They were to anoint the Tabernacle furniture and utensils; then individuals were anointed to consecrate them to serve God. It set them apart. There are two distinctions that separated the priesthood from the people, and these are the same two distinctions that separate true Christians from the world:

1. **Sanctification - to set apart for holy service:** 1 Thessalonians 5:23; and 1 Peter 3:15
The anointing is carried over from the Old Testament to the New Testament. It uses the symbol to help the Christians.

2. **The Anointing of the priesthood:** 1 John 2:27; and 1 Peter 2:9-10: The true followers of Christ are a priesthood set apart by the anointing oil of the Spirit.

3. What is the bottom line difference between the "wise" and the "foolish"?

Matthew 25:1-13: All had the same standing, and the same outward advantages.

Wise: Strong's #5429 *phronimos* (fron'-ee-mos); thoughtful or discreet (implying a cautious character)

Some Uses:

Matthew 7:24: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise <5429> man, which built his house upon a rock:"

Matthew 10:16: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise <5429> as serpents, and harmless as doves."

(So be wise and apply the things you have been taught, because you are going to be in an environment that is difficult.)

Foolish: Strong's #3474 *moros* (mo-ro's); dull or stupid (as if shut up), heedless, (morally) blockhead, (apparently) absurd

Some Uses:

Matthew 5:22: "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool <3474>, shall be in danger of hell fire (gehenna, a symbol of utter destruction)."

1 Corinthians 1:27: "But God hath chosen the foolish things <3474> of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;"

Titus 3:9: "But avoid foolish <3474> questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain."

In the parable, Jesus is drawing a striking difference in the two groups that were part of the same group - they had the same advantage, the same invitation, they were in the same place and had the same opportunity, they had the same lamps. Some were wise, some were foolish.

Let's take another look at our theme text:

Matthew 25:1-13: ³Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Each was prepared, but one group was far more prepared than the other.

Let's look at more differences between wise and foolish:

Proverbs 15:5-9: and 1 Corinthians 1:20-29: Worldly wisdom doesn't cut it in terms of spiritual matters. We need the humility to accept God's wisdom.

Wisdom is expressed through:



GODLINESS
HUMILITY

FORESIGHT
PATIENCE



Let's continue with our theme text: Matthew 25:1-13: *⁵But 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!' ⁷Then all those virgins arose 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, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' ¹⁰And 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.*

Here is the defining moment in the parable. At midnight, a cry was heard that the bridegroom arrived. Remember, this was a parable Jesus gave his followers to prepare them for his absence and then his return. Interesting point - the cry goes out amongst those who are waiting - only the virgins, not the whole world. This is the moment they anticipated and waited for, but not all were ready!

1 Corinthians 3:13-15: This is a scathing description of a separation. The preparation of each of these virgins is disclosed. There is a stark comparison revealed between the wise and the foolish.

Foolishness is expressed through:



PRIDE
CARELESSNESS
SHORTSIGHTEDNESS
HUMAN-MINDEDNESS (focusing on things less important)

Matthew 25:1-13: (NKJV) *¹¹"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹²But 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."*

They disappointed their calling. There was a **SERIOUS CONSEQUENCE** for not being prepared. It is as if the foolish virgins had other things on their minds - as if they were too busy or too preoccupied with "stuff" to entirely ready themselves for the task at hand. They were to be a part of this important occasion of the bridegroom coming and the door was shut.

Matthew 6:19-23: Jesus is admonishing us not to store up things on earth that can be destroyed. Instead, think about things that are spiritually important, like the wise virgins who were prepared.

In spite of having been told many times that Jesus' return would be a long way off, his disciples were still looking for the quick establishment of the Kingdom: Acts 1:6-7

Jesus continually prepared them on all levels to be faithful: Luke 12:32-40

Some final "words to the wise:" Matthew 7:24-27

The wise Christian hears, thinks, comprehends, plans and then acts. Then - and only then - is he or she faithful.

*So is Oil Really Important?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

