

THE GREAT WEDDING ... and the people who came late  
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(Matthew 25: 1-13)

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24: 3). By parable and preaching the Lord granted their request, and instructed them regarding His return. He warned them not to be deceived by false prophets ; He urged them not to be weary in well-doing ; and finally, in short thou, thought-provoking illustrations, He described the Church of the future.

#### The Certainty of His Return

" Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." As the lord drew near to His death and departure from this world, He constantly repeated the promise of His second advent, and His statement harmonized perfectly with other prophetic utterances. At His birth the promise had been given, " He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end " (Luke I : 32, 33). It need hardly be said that this promise was never fulfilled during His ministry on earth. The throne of David was in Jerusalem, where Christ received a cross and not a crown. Messianic prophecies referred to an earthly kingdom, and these predictions have never been fulfilled. The angels repeated the promise immediately after Christ's ascension (Acts I : 10, 11), and this teaching became the hope and message of the early Christian Church (I Thess. 4: 16-18 ; I John 3:2).

#### The Conformity to His Requirements

" Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish." It has been said that this is one of the greatest of Christ's parables. Here two classes are seen in bold relief. All ten virgins believed in the coming of the bridegroom, and hoped to be present at the marriage reception. The entire party waited for the glad event ; but in the moment of testing, five virgins were found to be unprepared to meet the bridegroom. Their lamps were going out! It is a cause for regret that hours had been wasted in sleeping, when a few minutes' work might have avoided a tragedy. The foolish virgins remind us of a vast host of modern people. Even the wise virgins were content to sit at ease and to slumber when at their very elbows were people in urgent need. It is not sufficient to believe in Christ's return: we must be ready for His appearing. None can deny that a large proportion of Christendom is filled with dead formalism. There are many custodians of the lamp, but not much light!

#### The Calamity of His Rejection

" And . . . the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." There is nothing to suggest that the door of opportunity was ever re-opened. The people who might have been rejoicing in

THE GREAT WEDDING ... and the people who came late the presence of the bridegroom were left to mourn in the shadows of the night. Three thoughts demand expression. (i) A belated request. " Lord, Lord, open to us." Had there been adequate preparation the need for this prayer would have been unknown. Hours of self-confidence had ruined priceless opportunities. (ii) A bewildering response. " I know you not." Self-esteem could not become a key to open the closed door. The Lord had disowned them, and His verdict was final. On another occasion He spoke of some who would say in the day of judgment, " I have preached in thy name," and again His response was, " I know you not." (iii) A bitter remorse. " . . . there shall be weeping." Jesus said, " Be ye also ready." Many Bible teachers believe the coming of Christ to be imminent. They may be correct in their deductions, and it behoves every Christian to attend to his lamp and thus be assured of personal readiness to meet the Lord. When the door of heaven closes it stays closed for a long time. It is far easier to walk through an open doorway, than it is to force a lock!

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