

The Book Of Revelation.

Week 10.

Matthew 25 verses 1 to 13. Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Luke 19 verses 11 to 27. Parable of the Talents.

Matthew 25 verses 31 to 46. Parable of the Sheep and Goats.

Matthew 13 verses 24 to 30. Parable of the Wheat and Tares.

Jesus taught many parables about the kingdom of God, but we want to focus on a few that specifically refer to the return of Jesus, and judgement. Specifically, they teach a definite link between our deeds and our eternal destiny.

This appears to fly in the face of the gospel, and especially the teaching of Paul, who says that it is by grace you have been saved, through faith. But let's dig deeper. Let's take a real life example of the woman caught in adultery.

Let's be clear, she was not forgiven and saved by any good deed. She was saved by encountering the grace of Jesus. But the last thing Jesus said to her was, "Go and sin no more". What if she had not taken this instruction seriously? Although Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you", is it possible that if she subsequently lived a sinful life, that she would not experience grace on judgement day?

This is why James says, "what good is it if someone claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?". We know the answer is no, because James later states that faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

So what are these deeds, that are so crucial to the life and outcome of our faith? Cults and legalistic churches will give you a formula that you have to follow, or a list of things you have to do. This twisted version of Christianity is no more going to save you than any of the world religions.

The Jews who followed Jesus's ministry had the same question. John 6 verses 28 to 29, tells the story. Then they asked him, what must we do, to do the works that God requires? Jesus answered, the work of God is this. To believe in the one he has sent.

Lest you should think that is the full story, Jesus also said, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in Heaven.

There is not room to include all the commands Jesus gave his disciples, or that Paul gave to the church, in terms of how to live for God.

Jesus put it together in the story of the wise and foolish builders. They both heard the word of God. The foolish did not obey the word. But, the wise obeyed the word. Here is the saving truth. Your deed, or good work, is simply to obey what God is telling you to do today. For some, that will be, to do mighty exploits. For others, it will be to give God your time. The main thing to understand, is that God speaks to us uniquely. Everyone is on a different stage of the faith journey. One person cannot step into the shoes of another, and should not feel

condemned for not doing so. Therefore we cannot judge one another, because one does not do the same works that another does. Yes, there is an ultimate command to go into all the world and preach the gospel. But we get to that, one baby step at a time.

These parables are going to focus on works. Remember that works on their own cannot save you. But neither can faith unless it produces obedience in your heart toward the day by day steps that God is asking you to take. So take courage, God wants to refine your faith, He wants to fan into flame that smouldering wick. He wants your faith to be alive, so that you are worthy of Him.

Matthew 25 verses 1 to 13. The parable of the ten virgins.

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out. Here’s the bridegroom. Come out to meet him.

Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, Give us some of your oil. Our lamps are going out.

No, they replied, there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.

But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

Later the others also came.

Sir, Sir, they said. Open the door for us. But he replied, I tell you the truth, I don’t know you. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Let's unpack this parable.

Who are the virgins? Virgins or maidens are a picture of the people of God. Israel is referred to as the betrothed of God. The church is referred to as the bride. But notice that all ten virgins are described as the kingdom of God. And notice that they all went out to meet the bridegroom, which tells us that they all had faith for his return. So let's not convince ourselves that the five foolish virgins were unbelievers. All ten represent the people of God.

Five were wise and five were foolish. The words, “foolish and wise” are so commonplace that it is easy to forget what the Bible means by these words. Jesus said that the foolish man

built his house upon the sand. He did not spend time on good foundations. The wise man built his house upon the rock. It was hard work, but he spent time on solid foundations. Later in the same parable Jesus said that the foolish man hears the word of God, but does not obey. The wise man hears the word of God and puts it into practice.

So you get the picture. The wise represent those who walk in the fear of God, truly repent of sin, and put God first place. The foolish represent those who take a more casual approach to God, you might say, they abuse His grace, or you might say, they do not have a close walk with God. But they all attend the same church. They all confess the same faith.

What do the lamps represent? The lamps speak of the people of God's witness to the world. Jesus said, "You are the light of the world". Jesus also said, "Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to the whole house".

The foolish virgins look just like the wise virgins to begin with. They all had faith. They all expected the bridegroom to return. They all took their lamps to meet their bridegroom. So the foolish had the intention to be a witness. They had the intention to be obedient followers of Jesus.

But now we see one small difference between the wise and the foolish virgins. The wise took oil in jars or flasks, as well as their lamps. But the foolish took only lamps, no extra jars of oil. So the foolish virgins had a free hand, with which to perhaps do, or carry other things while also carrying their lamps. Perhaps they believed this was a clever approach, since they could now multitask. The wise virgins on the other hand, were heavily laden, one hand carrying the lamp, the other carrying the flask. There was no room for attending to any other task.

What does the oil represent? Oil is the energy source of the lamp. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is the power behind our witness. So does this mean that the foolish virgins were not baptized in the Holy Spirit? It's not that simple, for later we read that the foolish virgins say, "our lamps are going out". So they had some oil, but not enough oil. In other words, they possibly had the Holy Spirit, but they were not filled to overflowing.

How much oil do you need? That is not the question to ask. The foolish will ask that question, and get it wrong. How much do I have to sacrifice? How much do I have to pray? These are questions that reveal a selfish agenda. God's agenda is an inconvenience to the foolish virgin.

Paul said, "Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs". The foolish say, when I have time, I will do that. The wise say, time can wait while I obey my Lord. When the foolish obey, they do it reluctantly, the wise obey joyfully.

Who is the bridegroom? This is Jesus, who has been at the right hand of the Father for the last 2000 years.

Notice that all ten virgins fell asleep. In other words, both the wise and foolish face the same obstacles. If you recognize that your faith has been lulled into inactivity, this does not mean you are a foolish virgin. They all fell asleep!

Midnight represents the darkest time. Also the time when people may least expect a visit. Jesus said that he will return at a time we least expect. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5, that while people are saying “peace and safety”, destruction will come on them suddenly.

Now see again, the foolish appear to act like the wise. All the virgins trimmed their lamps, not only the wise. Even the foolish virgins trimmed their lamps. In other words, they tried their best. Trimming a lamp involves 3 actions.

1. Removing the charred part of the wick. This speaks of removing waste and sin from your life. Cutting off things that are a waste of time, and moving on from the past.
2. Raising the wick so that more of it can burn. This speaks of making our lives available to be a witness.
3. Adding more oil to the lamp as required. All the decisions and actions we take towards being a witness are useless if we actually don't have any oil. If the lamp is out of oil, no matter how we trim the wick, we will not be able to produce any light.

Lest we should reduce this parable to a simple comparison between Spirit filled and non-Spirit filled Christians, it is far from that simple. A non-charismatic Christian who walks in the fear of God is a wiser virgin than the charismatic Christian who is living a self centred life. So there is no elite church stream who will qualify to be a wise virgin. At the end of the day it all boils down to the obedience of the individual to God's word and God's voice.

When the foolish virgins saw that their lamps were empty, they cried out to the wise, “Give us some of your oil”. Why didn't the wise share their oil? Here, the illustration needs to be explained. Of course, in the story, the wise could have shared their oil. But wise believers cannot share their spirit with foolish believers. In other words, the humble believer who understands his dependency on the Holy Spirit, cannot somehow pour his spirit into a foolish believer, who has not fully understood their need for the Holy Spirit.

First, the foolish believer needs to humble himself, let the word of God dwell richly in his heart, and develop a relationship with God in prayer, so that the Spirit of God can begin to fill his life. This is no overnight transformation. Those who have a store of oil, did not acquire it in a moment. They dug deep into God first.

This is why the wise virgins declined the request. Not because they were selfish. They knew that the foolish virgins would have to go to the source of the oil, and exchange money to buy their own oil.

In the story, the source of oil was the oil tradesmen. In our lives, the source of the oil of the Holy Spirit is God. In the story, the foolish virgins went to buy oil with their money. In our lives, the only currency we can exchange for the oil of the Holy Spirit, is our humility, our repentance and our time.

While the foolish virgins were on their way to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived, and those who were ready, the wise virgins, went in with him to the feast, and the door was shut.

Later, the foolish virgins returned with their oil. Why were they not allowed into the wedding feast? They had their oil after all. This tells us that there is a time limit. In fact the lord of the feast said to them "i do not know you". This tells us that there is a window of time to know God and walk close to Him. That is why Jesus ends with these words. Therefore keep watch, for you do not know the day or the hour.

This is a devastating end to the parable. While a parable does not represent exactly the truth it seeks to illustrate, we would be wise to understand this. When Jesus returns, He will not recognize disobedient followers as his own. Now is the time to repent of taking His grace for granted, and now is the time to begin to walk in the fear of the Lord.

To conclude, it appears that all ten virgins represent the Church. This parable teaches the dangers of living a carnal, disobedient and casual Christian life. The five foolish virgins seem to be in the same boat as the Church of Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3, spewed out of God's mouth. Friends, let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Luke 19 verses 11 to 27. The parable of the talents.

Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

Therefore He said. A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten talents, and said to them, Do business till I come.

But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this *man* to reign over us'.

And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your talent has earned ten talents'. And he said to him, 'Well *done*, good servant, because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities'.

And the second came, saying, 'Master, your talent has earned five talents'. Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities'.

Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your talent, which I have kept, put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.

And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, *you* wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit, and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the talent from him, and give *it* to him who has ten talents'. But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten talents'. For I say to you, that to everyone who has, more will be given, and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay *them* before me.

The interesting thing about this parable is that the Bible explains why it was told. Jesus was getting near Jerusalem, and the people thought that He was about to take over as king, and begin to reign. So in order to put His physical reign over Jerusalem into perspective, He told this parable.

Let's explain the parable step by step.

Before Jesus is given the kingdom of Israel, He has to go far away, in fact he goes to sit at the Father's right hand in Heaven, before returning to earth.

As He leaves, Jesus distributes gifts to his servants. In the parable, the gift was a talent of gold. But what gift did Jesus give us when he left earth? The answer lies in Acts chapter 1 verse 8 where Jesus said, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you", and also in John chapter 16 verse 7, where Jesus says, "unless I go away, the Holy Spirit will not come to you". So there is one gift which Jesus gave his children at his departure, it was the deposit of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus distributes the gifts, He instructs his servants to do business till he returns. In the parable, the business is simple financial gain. But with the gift of the Holy Spirit, what business can we do? We only need to look at Jesus's final instructions to his disciples. The business that Jesus referred to is summed up in these final words in Mark 16 verse 15, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature".

His citizens, not the servants, then rebel and make it clear they do not want Him to be king. The citizens represent the unrepentant world. The servants represent the church.

When Jesus returns he demands an account of his investment from His servants. In the parable, the financial gain from doing business with gold, is easy to quantify. How do we quantify the gain that we can make from the gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Is it sheer numbers of conversions? We can only speculate, but God has always looked for quality, not quantity. Look at the story of Gideon for instance. God dismissed the large army of Israelites in favour of 300 faith filled soldiers. The life of John Oxtoby of Yorkshire did not result in thousands converted. But because this man spent his life in prayer and in the word, every time he spoke to someone, there was an impartation of the fear of God. He bore quality fruit.

The servant's faithfulness in carrying out instructions is rewarded by authority over cities. Both in the parable, and in the Millennium reign of Christ, there is a connection between obedience and authority. Those who obeyed much, were given much authority.

The servant who did not invest his talent was harshly judged. Apparently he could have obeyed in some small way, but even this he did not do, probably for fear of losing the talent, since he was afraid of his master.

It is possible to view the master's judgement as unfair or harsh. At least the servant returned the talent. He had not stolen, had he? This comparison may help.

Imagine for a moment that the talent represented a medical cure for a life threatening plague running rampant throughout the world. Had the servant only used the talent, many would have been saved.

But instead, the servant could not understand the true value of the talent, and therefore hid it away. Now can you understand the anger of the master? This servant considered his own life more precious than the lives of the many who he had been sent to help.

Luke does not clarify the outcome for this servant, except to say his talent was taken from him and given to the servant who was obedient. However Matthew says that the fearful and disobedient servant was thrown into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Could this be a picture of hell? It would be wise not to find out, by personal experience.

Jesus then judged the rebel citizens with death. So really, did the disobedient servant fare any better than the rebellious citizens of earth? The answer is no. To conclude, let's read from Revelation 21 verse 8. But the cowardly, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire, which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. In the fear of God, let us understand that cowards will share the same fate as murderers. Let us take heed and repent of lukewarm timid Christianity.

Matthew 25 verses 31 to 46. The parable of the sheep and goats.

"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

And all the nations will be gathered before Him. And He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and He will put the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will say to those on His right, Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink.

I was a stranger, and you invited Me in, naked, and you clothed Me. I was sick, and you visited Me, I was in prison, and you came to Me.

Then the righteous will answer Him, Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink?

And when did we see You *as* a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?

And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did *it* for one of the least of these brothers *or sisters* of Mine, you did *it* for Me.'

Then He will also say to those on His left, Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in, naked, and you did not clothe Me, sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.

Then they themselves also will answer, Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or *as* a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?

Then He will answer them, Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did **not** do *it* for one of the least of these, you did **not** do *it* for Me, either. These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Another devastating parable. It echoes the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 7. Imagine gathering on judgement day, strongly believing that you are on the right side of God. You have all the right language. You call him Lord. But there is more. Throughout your life You have prophesied, cast out demons and done many miracles in the name of Jesus. Possibly this is referring to those in ministry positions. The message is clear. You won't be judged as a sheep because you were a church leader. Jesus says, "Only the one who does the will of my father".

Now is the time to understand that powerful exhibitions of the gifts of the Spirit are not evidence of obedience. The evidence of obedience can be found in your heart. The motive for what you do, is far more precious to God, than what you do.

What somebody does on a stage in front of a congregation might appear to be godly. But God alone knows the heart's motivation. And there is one area that God uses in this parable to expose our heart motivation. Our attitude to the poor, the homeless, the rejected and the despised.

When you care for someone that cannot offer anything back, when you invest in those who cannot pay you back, when you reach out to those who are destitute and despised, God knows that love is the motivation.

Let's balance this by saying that there is no amount of social action you can be involved in that will persuade God to judge you as righteous. Our righteousness is filthy rags. But for those who have been saved by His grace, Paul advises us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling.

In the fear of God, let us love as God loves. Let us love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who spitefully use us. Let us love our neighbour as the Good Samaritan did, let us bless the House of Jacob by standing up for Jews, when others would willingly persecute them.

Let us not make social action our good deed of the day, instead let us be motivated by love at all times. Let us not put our good deeds on show, let us love unselfishly when no one is watching. Then we may be counted as sheep.

To conclude, it all boils down to obedience. We are not in a religious competition of good deeds. Rather, everyone's obedience is a private walk with God. No one can judge another, for God leads us all uniquely, and our only call is to follow His still small voice.

Matthew 13 verses 24 to 30. Parable of the Wheat and Weeds.

Jesus told them another parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

The owner's servants came to him and said, Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?

An enemy did this, he replied.

The servants asked him, Do you want us to go and pull them up?

No, he answered, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.

He answered, The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.

The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom.

The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Let's break this down.

The field. It's barren and wild, like the world. Whatever is growing there is already of the evil one. Every person is born in sin. Regardless of the faith of our parents, regardless of whether or not we attend church, we all begin as strangers to God, sinners in need of salvation.

Then, along came Jesus, without whom we would all perish, and he sows the truth of God into the world, resulting in people repenting, receiving the word of God into their hearts, and getting born again into the kingdom of God.

The Greek word for "weeds" in this parable represents a specific type of weed called darnel. This weed looks just like wheat, in fact you cannot tell the difference until the crop is ready for harvest. At that point the darnel grain is black, while the wheat grain is brown. Darnel grain can host a poisonous fungus that can cause death, if enough is eaten. When this parable was spoken, it was a common act of retaliation to sow darnel in your neighbour's field, and so destroy the whole crop.

The servants are angels, who are instructed to wait until harvest time before uprooting and bundling the weeds for burning, before gathering the wheat into the barn.

There is just one glaring question. Who are the weeds? There are a few different explanations, but let's attempt to settle on the most likely one.

Sinners.

One explanation is that the good seed represented Adam, made perfect and without sin.

Then Satan came along to sow the seed of sin in the world.

Since the redemption of the cross, the good seeds have multiplied as many have received and believed the gospel.

Ultimately the bad seed simply represent sinners.

This explanation misses the point that darnel resembles wheat.

For the most part, sinners do not live like believers.

The Nominal Church.

Another explanation is that the weeds represent people in religious Christianity.

Today we still have pharisees. Like the pharisees of old, they are the blind leading the blind, relying on traditions rather than the Holy Spirit.

They are the nominal Christians, Christian by name, but not in the heart. Steeped in theology, but devoid of the Spirit of God.

They look like, speak like, and sometimes act like re-born children of God. But the love of God is not in their hearts.

However the sinister element of darnel does not accurately illustrate the nominal Christian, who cannot really be described as an imposter, but instead one who is simply not enlightened, to recognize their need to be born again.

Cults.

The nineteenth century saw the birth of major cults like the Jehovah Witnesses and the Mormons, amongst others. The most dangerous cults are those who claim to follow the Bible. They present a squeaky clean image which attracts those who are disenchanted with the church in general, and might be looking for a religious utopia.

Here is where it gets sinister. Just like the pharisees of old, they teach that the only way to achieve salvation is to follow requirements and rules that do nothing to change your heart.

Like the pharisees, they present an outwardly holy image. Whitewashed tombs, outwardly beautiful, but full of dead men's bones.

Like the pharisees of Jesus time, they pile heavy burdens on people. Of these people Jesus said.

Woe to you, who shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in peoples' faces. You yourselves do not enter heaven, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

Cults seem to be a good representation for the weeds.

They appeared after the good seed was sown by Jesus.

They look like the good seed. Their followers are enthusiastic and desire to be holy.

Despite looks, they host destructive spirits that cause people to live in condemnation and fear.

When the angels asked if they could pull up the weeds, the answer is no. If the weeds represent the major cults based on Christianity, then the reason could be this.

Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses are a lot more organized and zealous in their witness to the world than many churches. Due to their door to door knocking, and presence in town centres, they may reach those who the church will never reach. They don't have the real gospel, but they create an awareness of God in millions who may never otherwise have heard the gospel. And some of their followers will realize the emptiness of these organizations, and finally find Jesus as their saviour.

Therefore, just as darnel cannot be accurately identified until harvest, so the hearts of many in these cults may only show their true colours at the end time, by whether they accept the gospel of Jesus, and repent, or whether they cling to their traditions.

To summarize, let's not judge those who are followers of these cults. We recognize the major doctrinal faults that these cults preach. But what we cannot deny, is the devotion of their followers to spread their version of the word. Let us pray that as the end times approach, many in these cults will open their hearts to the true Gospel.

To conclude.

Let's be like the wise virgin, who is always filled with the Holy Spirit.

Let's be like the obedient servant, who understands the true value of the talent, and spends his life to carry out the master's business.

Let's be the sheep who not only calls him Lord, but who loves the despised and the poor and needy.

Let's be the wheat, who are not quick to judge those in cults, but instead reach out to them, that some may be saved.

Now is the time to live holy lives, now is the time for revival, now is the time to repent for not taking God seriously. We cannot fake revival, but if we pray like our lives depend on it, revival will come, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit, says the Lord!

This is the end of our 10 week course on the Book of Revelation.

We pray this course has not just given you information, but also sparked revival in your heart to give you a new hunger for God's word and a closer walk with Jesus our King and Messiah.

For more material please visit our website

<https://www.cabinministries.org>

What Do You Think?

Did you realise these parables relate to the end times?

What does it mean to carry a flask of oil?

What are you doing with the gift of the Holy Spirit?

And are you happy to bear no fruit?

Is there another way to interpret the parable of the weeds?

How do we stay away from works based salvation but at the same time, live a life of obedience as a sheep?