

Parable of the Ten Virgins

By Uriah Smith

TEXT: Matt. 25:10: "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." If there is one point in the Christian's experience which is of supreme importance, a moment which he should contemplate with the profoundest interest, it is that hidden line that marks the limit of his probation, that moment which decides his eternal destiny.

"There is a time - we know not when;
A point - we know not where;
That marks the destiny of men,
To glory or despair."

Such a moment is brought to view in the text. A certain class there represented as ready, go in with the bridegroom at a certain time, to what is called the marriage; and then the door is shut; and afterward, when another class come and seek admittance, they cannot find it.

Is it possible for us to understand our relation to this decisive moment, and to know when we are drawing near thereto?

In the great Advent movement of 1833-44, this parable was instinctively turned to as one which had a vital connection with the movement, and illustrated its principal features. It was given that prominence and importance to which its evidently solemn truths entitle it. The Adventists of that day well understood the general scope of the parable; and although they had not then

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light sufficient to discern the real meaning of one of its essential features, they had an Application for it all, and used it with wonderful effect. We hear less about it now. Further light was needed to a full understanding of it, and to those who have rejected that light, the subject has grown darker and darker. The disappointment of the passing of the time, threw them into confusion; their misapplication of the parable threw them into still worse confusion. They lost their bearings; and locating in the future what belonged to the past, they looked for the fulfillment of events which they will ever expect in vain; for they are already accomplished.

There is just one key to the solution of this parable, just one subject which explains it, and that is the subject of the sanctuary. Without a correct view of the sanctuary question, it is no more possible to explain the parable of the ten virgins than it would be possible to explain the movements of the heavenly bodies without a knowledge of the Copernican theory of the solar system.

The intuition of believers in 1844, as to the importance of this parable, we believe were correct. The occasion, the subject, the speaker all show this. It follows that discourse in Matthew 24, which is justly termed, "Our Lord's great Prophecy." It is designed to illustrate the experience of the church in connection with the doctrine of the second coming of Christ; for to this point, as its ultimate object, the whole of Matthew 24 is devoted. We are taken down step by step through the whole dispensation from the first to the second advent of the Saviour. The chapter closes with the church standing in the last generation ever to live on the earth, and with a warning against the danger and doom of the evil servant who says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming." "*Then*" says the

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opening sentence of the parable, "shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." The expression "kingdom of heaven" is here used, as in many other instances in the New Testament, to denote the work of the gospel among men; as in the parable of the net, the mustard seed, the leaven, etc. And by it we are taught that at the time referred to, the experience of the church in the Advent movement might be likened to the events of an Eastern wedding.

The time and the circumstances being thus clearly defined, let us look at the movements connected with an Eastern marriage ceremony, and also at the experience of the church at the time when the coming of Christ is drawing nigh, and mark what events in the latter we are instructed to look for by the illustrations of the former.

The first movement was on the part of the bridegroom, who came with a procession, with torches, timbrels, and song, to the place of the marriage. Meanwhile the virgins were waiting to greet him on the way, and join the procession to the appointed place. If there chanced to be some delay on the part of the bridegroom beyond the hour when he was expected, the virgins would naturally incline to drowsiness as they waited, and suffer their lights to grow dim. But when the procession did finally come, they were all to proceed together to their common destination. The householder who made the wedding, provided each with a suitable garment in which to appear at the ceremony, called the "wedding garment." And in these garments, the guests, having reached the appointed place, were to array themselves. A suitable time being given for this purpose, the master came in to examine them to see if all had complied with the regulations, and were properly arrayed in the wedding garment; then the marriage took place, and the prolonged

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festivities of the marriage feast in due time followed.

Such were the essential features of an Eastern marriage; and through these Christ would instruct us in regard to certain positions which he is to fill, and certain experiences through which the church is to pass in connection with this second coming. First, he is the divine Bridegroom; secondly, there is a definite object called "the bride;" thirdly, there is coming a specific time when a union is to be consummated between the two, called "the marriage of the Lamb;" fourthly, there is a season of joy and heavenly entertainment to follow, called "marriage

supper of the Lamb; "but, fifthly this season immediately follows the redemption of God's people (Rev. 19:1-8,) clearly implying that the marriage is, at least, closely connected with the coming of Christ; and, sixthly, these events were to excite great interest among men, and cause a movement to be made which would be aptly illustrated by the going forth of virgins to meet the bridegroom at an Eastern wedding.

Having now before us the events and the actors concerned in these events, it remains that we locate them, and trace, as far as we can, the fulfillment of the parable.

As Christ is the bridegroom, and the leading event of the parable is the coming of the bridegroom, it follows that the virgins represent the church; for the church are the ones to be interested in, and to make preparations for, that event. When Mr. Miller and his co-laborers, at the beginning of the present generation, preached that the Saviour was soon to appear, the church arose, took their lamps - the word of God - and went forth to meet him. This "going forth to meet him" of course implies only the attention that would be given to the subject of the coming of the Lord, and the

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requisite work of preparation for that event. The ten virgins introduced in the parable, represent the whole number who become interested in the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. The fact that just five of these virgins were said to be foolish, shows that no definite proportion was designed to be expressed between the wise and foolish; inasmuch as this is the only division which would not seem to denote definiteness. The foolish virgins, that is, that part of the professed believers in the Advent movement represented by them, took no oil in their vessels with their lamps; they had only the oil with which their lamps were first filled, but nothing to replenish them with, when the first supply was exhausted. In other words, they had only the first impulses to carry them forward in the work. The motives by which they were impelled into it were not true and genuine, and they had not the grace to stand, should delay occur and a special strain be made upon their endurance.

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. There could not be even a seeming tarry on the part of the bridegroom until some definite point of time, at which he was expected to appear, had been reached and passed. This shows that in this movement there would be a definite time set for the Lord to come; but the time would pass by, and there would be a seeming delay in his appearing. It was precisely so in the Advent movement. The close of the year 1843, Jewish time, which ended with the first new moon after the vernal equinox in 1844, according to the modern calendar, was fixed as the date which would not pass before the Lord would come. When that time did pass, more or less uncertainty and confusion followed. Those engaged in the movement, being thrown by this unexpected occurrence into a condition of doubt and perplexity,

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naturally began to lose their faith and zeal. They all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." The use of the term "midnight" clearly implies that the period

of waiting would be a time of darkness; and in the very midnight of that darkness, a cry would be raised, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." This must be owing to some new evidence which would spring up, and some new tokens which would appear, to show that the delay was soon to end, that the bridegroom was indeed coming, and that the cry should accordingly be made. Three months from the set time in the spring of 1844 passed by. With every declining day the doubt and uncertainty and darkness of the situation increased. The midnight of 1844 was reached, and then occurred a movement which is a phenomenon among religious revivals. All at once was heard in different parts of the land, the cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him," - a cry raised by men simultaneously, although they knew nothing of each other's movements. The result was a sudden awakening and as powerful a spiritual work as has, perhaps, ever appeared in the Christian Church. It will be of interest, as it is also necessary to an understanding of the subject, to inquire into the causes which led to this movement.

In this tarrying time, the Adventist leaders had not been idle. Many of them who were men of clear minds and careful thought, were earnestly seeking to solve the mystery of the delay. They suddenly discovered new light - some on the prophetic periods, others on the types of the former dispensation, all of which threw light at once on their position. The great prophetic period, the termination of which was supposed to mark

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the time for the coming of the Lord, and which was the great foundation of the Advent movement, was the 2300 prophetic days (literal) of Dan. 8:14: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." It was proved beyond all contradiction that those days began in 457 B. C. An argument was then constructed, somewhat loosely as it now appears, as follows: "457 B. C., and 1843 A. D., together made 2300; therefore the days will terminate by the last day of the year 1843, Jewish time." They discovered that if they did end thus, they must have commenced with the very first day of 457 B. C.; for it takes 457 *full* years before Christ, and 1843 *full* years after Christ, to make 2300 years. Further study showed that they did not begin with the first day of 457 B. C., but in the autumn of that year; ¹¹ consequently their termination would not be reached till the autumn of the year following 1843; that is, the autumn of 1844. And inasmuch as the event to occur at the end of the days was the cleansing of the sanctuary, they looked back to the type, and found that the sanctuary was always cleansed on the tenth day of the seventh month; which again pointed to the autumn, according to our current calendar. Putting these facts together, they concluded that the days would end, not in the spring of 1844, as they had at first supposed, but in the autumn of the year, on the 10th day of the 7th month, Jewish time, which in that year fell on the 22nd of October. That day of that month was therefore set as the time when the days would end and the sanctuary be cleansed. The sanctuary they supposed to be the earth, and that its cleansing would be by fire at the revelation

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of the Lord Jesus. Therefore the cry was raised, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him;" and the whole church, like the virgins awakened by the cry at midnight, bounded to their feet as the proclamation rang through the land.

They were all aroused, and trimmed their lamps, but the foolish had no oil in their vessels. Some did not seem to be able to enter into the movement with the earnestness, zeal, and joy that others experienced. They were told to go and buy for themselves; that is, to seek for themselves individually, the light and the blessing of the Lord. And it is a significant fact that this movement was just midway between the passing of the time in the spring of 1844 and the autumn of that year, where it was finally ascertained that the days would end. The cry thus raised continued to be given with ever-increasing power, though all did not receive it, till that point of time was reached which had been set for the end of the days. "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came."

Did the bridegroom come when the days ended? He certainly did not come to this earth as they had expected. But does the parable bring to view such a coming? Is it a coming on the part of Christ, in the clouds of heaven to this earth, which is represented in the parable by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage? The question now to be answered is, "What is the coming of the bridegroom brought to view in the parable?" Is it the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven? or does it point out some other event? Let it be noticed, first of all, that the bridegroom in the parable was coming *to the marriage*. That, of course, illustrates the coming of Christ to that event which is called his marriage, or "the marriage of the Lamb." But does the marriage of the Lamb take place upon this earth? - By no means. Then his coming to *the marriage* is

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not his coming *to this earth*. When he comes to his people here, he returns *from the wedding*. Luke 12:36. Then his coming *to the wedding* is some other event. What is it?

To ascertain this, several other questions must be answered; namely, What is the bride? what is the marriage? and when, where, and how, is the marriage to take place? A word may be necessary in regard to a wide-spread misapprehension as to what constitutes the bride. Almost uniformly, in the religious world, the church is called the bride, because Paul uses the marriage relation to illustrate the union which exists between Christ and his church. But if the church be the bride, then the marriage of the Lamb has been going on ever since souls began to be united to him. But does any one believe this? No one can believe it, in view of the fact that the marriage of the Lamb is set forth in the Scriptures as a definite event to be accomplished in connection with the redemption of his people; for as they enter the joys of the glorified state, they sing, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for *the marriage of the Lamb is come*, and his wife hath made herself ready" - not, and we as the bride, have made ourselves ready. Rev. 19:7. And certainly the church cannot be the bride in this parable; for here the church is represented by the virgins. The bridegroom does not come to marry the virgins; but the virgins go forth to meet

him as he is coming to the marriage to take to himself another party which is called the bride.

The church not being the bride, we extend the inquiry, "What is the bride?" a step further. In Rev. 21:9, 10 John declares that one of the seven angels which had the seven last plagues (one who has to do with the closing scenes of this world's history,) addressed him thus: "Come hither, I will show thee the

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bride, the Lamb's wife." Then the angel took him away to a high mountain, and showed him the city of God, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. This city, then, is plainly called the bride; for we may be sure the angel did not mingle deception with the holy vision he was imparting to John.

To parry the force of this testimony, those who claim that the church is the bride, affirm that this city is merely a symbol of the church. But to make this city, with its four-square contour, its foundation stones and wall, its gates and streets, its four outlooks toward the four points of the compass, its river and tree of life, and its throne of God and the Lamb, - to make all this simply a figure of the church, is too great a paroxysm of mystification to be entertained by any one; and we therefore dismiss at once this supposition. Moreover, John says that when this city comes down from God out of heaven, it is prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2;) and Paul, speaking of the same city (Gal. 4:26) says that it is "the mother of us all." By the phrase "us all," Paul certainly means the church. We, then, are the children of that city, not the city itself. The children must not be confounded with the mother.

With this city, the Lamb, when he takes it as his own, is to be intimately connected. The Lamb's twelve apostles have their names upon its twelve foundation stones. Rev. 21:14. The Lamb's people in twelve divisions have their names upon its twelve gates. Verse 12. The Lamb in connection with God is the temple of it. Verse 22. He is also the light of it. Verse 23. And the Lamb's book of life is the great register of the names of all those who are entitled to enter therein. Verse 27. And above all, and over all, is the throne of the Lamb, from which proceeds the river of life that makes glad the city of God. Rev. 22:1; Ps. 46:4.

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And the prophet Isaiah, addressing this city, as a representative of the new covenant, says: "Thy Maker is thy husband." Isa. 54:5. Paul, in Gal. 4:26, 27, applies this very prophecy to the New Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all. Christ is the author of the covenant. He is the maker of the City. He is the husband of this city, which, in the illustration used to set forth the events connected with the carrying out of the great plan of salvation, is called the bride.

Having now learned from the testimony of the Scriptures who the bridegroom is, and also what the bride is, it is not difficult to tell what the marriage is - it is a special relation which these parties at some time enter into with each other. Is there, then, ever to come a time when Christ is to enter into such a relation with this city, and so receive it unto himself, that the event may be called the marriage of the Lamb? - Most certainly; for this city is to be the grand metropolis of his future kingdom. There is his throne; and when he takes his throne, he receives the city as his own, the ornament and glory of the occasion when he is crowned

King of kings and Lord of lords. As he therefore takes the kingdom when he takes the city, his marriage may be described as his *reception of the kingdom*. But he receives his kingdom before he comes in the clouds of heaven; for he represents himself in Luke 19:11, 12, by the nobleman who went away into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return; so Christ has gone away to receive his kingdom, and then return; and when he appears in the clouds of heaven, it is after he has been invested with royalty; for he is then seated upon the throne of his glory. Matt. 25:31. If, therefore, we can ascertain when, and under what circumstances, Christ receives his kingdom, we can tell what the marriage is, and when he comes to it.

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Christ receives the kingdom of his Father. Ps. 2:8; 110:1; Luke 22:29. The prophet Daniel describes the scene when this kingdom is delivered to the Son. Dan. 7:13, 14: "I saw in the visions, and, behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." But this coming to the reception of the kingdom is introduced after the scene described in verses 9 and 10. Daniel there says: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit [that is, "took his position as judge in a court of justice;" for so the words "did sit" signify in the Hebrew;] . . . the judgment was set, and the books were opened." What judgment scene is this? - It is some portion of the judgment work which takes place before the kingdom is received, as described in verse 14, and consequently before Christ's work as priest is finished.

And right here the light of the sanctuary question comes to our aid in the exposition of this subject; for that shows just such a judgment work as this, as the closing act of our great High priest in the tabernacle on high, when he finishes his mediation for the world, and before he ascends the throne as King. He closes his great round of service as priest in the same manner in which the round of service in the typical tabernacle of Moses was closed *each year*, and that was by a brief ministration in the most holy place, which was the making of the atonement, or the cleansing of the sanctuary. So Christ, antitypically, enters the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to make the atonement, and cleanse the sanctuary. And this is a work of judgment; for it is to remove sin, and decide

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who is accepted of God, and who is to be cut off from among the people. Lev. 23:29. Such a work of judgment must be rendered, and all cases be decided, before Christ appears in the clouds of heaven; for when he appears, no time is given for the investigation of character, but in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the results of some previous decision are carried out, the righteous living are translated, and the righteous dead are raised from the grave. The sanctuary subject provides a time and place for this judgment work, and no other subject does this - it is the cleansing of the sanctuary, the close of Christ's ministration which transpires in the most holy place; and immediately on the conclusion of this, he receives the kingdom, which is *the marriage of the Lamb*.

When, then, did Christ enter upon this work in the most holy place in the sanctuary in heaven? - At the end of the 2300 days in 1844; for "then," says the prophecy (Dan. 8:14,) "shall the sanctuary be cleansed." When does he go in before the Ancient of days, according to Dan. 7:13, 14, to receive a kingdom? - When he goes in before the Father in the most holy place; for he does not leave the Father's presence there till he is invested with the royalty of his own throne. When, then, did Christ go to the wedding in the representation of the parable (Matt. 25:10?) - He went to the wedding at this same time, i.e., when he entered the most holy to cleanse the sanctuary, and then receive his kingdom.

"While they went to buy, the bridegroom came." The Adventists of 1844 fixed the end of the days on the 22nd of October of that year; and the argument still holds good that there they did end: there they thought the bridegroom would come; and *there he did come* - not to this earth, as they incorrectly supposed; but *to the*

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marriage, that is, to the place where he is to be crowned king, receive the bride, the New Jerusalem, as the metropolis of his kingdom, through which, according to the allegorical representation of the new covenant (Isa. 54:1-7; Gal. 4:26-28,) the children - the church - are to be brought to the new life of the heavenly kingdom.

They simply mistook the kind of coming referred to in the expression, "while they went to buy, the bridegroom *came*". All that the prophecy of Dan. 8:14, or the parable of the ten virgins, warranted them to expect, *did there and then take place*. The bridegroom came - not to this earth, but to the marriage, to which, in the parable, he was coming when the midnight cry was raised. The "tarrying time" of the parable ended when he thus came to the marriage in the autumn of 1844; and the "midnight cry" of the parable was given from the midsummer of 1844 to that time. Some are looking for this cry to be given in the future; but their expectations are vain; for it will never be repeated.

What, then, has been the position of the church since that time? and what is our present relation to the parable? A query may here arise in some minds on this wise: "You say that the bridegroom came in 1844? - Yes; to the wedding. "But the parable says that they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. So you have the door shut in 1844, and no admittance, and no mercy, for any one since that time? Not quite so fast. Here is the turning point in the parable, and where some jump to a wrong conclusion, as they did in 1844. Even those to whom the light on the sanctuary subject had begun to dawn in 1845, were fast drifting to the conclusion that as there was no ministry in the first apartment of the sanctuary while the work was going forward in the second, and the door of the first apartment was shut, it signified that

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during this time, no mercy was offered to the world. A further investigation of the question, however, aided by the spirit of prophecy then beginning to be manifested, soon set them right on this; for they saw that the work in the most holy was a work of forgiveness and pardon to all who would seek for its benefit, as well as the work in the holy place. Anciently, the offering in the most holy on

the day of atonement was for all the people; and so also in the antitype. If the door of the first apartment was shut, the door into the second apartment was opened. And the so-called door of mercy cannot be shut while the ministration in the most holy continues. ²1

Mark also the very important modifying clause - *they that were ready* went in with him to the marriage. But who was *ready* then? who is *ready* yet? Here is the test question in the application.

WHEN AND HOW IS IT TO BE DETERMINED WHO ARE READY?

No one can be pronounced "ready" till his case *has been examined* to see whether or not he is ready. After the bridegroom has come to the marriage, the King must come in to see the guests, to see whether all have on the wedding garment or not. Matt. 22:11-13. What is this period of examination?- It is the period of the investigative judgment in the sanctuary above, already referred to. Will any of the guests go in to the marriage before the very last guest is decided to be ready? - By no means. And when will that be? - When the ministration in the most holy place of the sanctuary is

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finished, and every case is decided. When does the marriage take place, or, in other words, when does Christ receive his kingdom? - When he has finished his work as priest in the heavenly sanctuary. That is, after we pass the ending of the days, and Christ goes to the marriage, and the work of cleansing the sanctuary, or the examination and decision of all cases, begins, then all further events, all further declarations and remaining prophecies, pass over at once to the conclusion of that work, when the last act of ministration in the sanctuary shall be done. This work, having once commenced, absorbs for the time being the whole current of the parable; and when that is done, then those of the guests who are found with the wedding garment on, are pronounced "ready;" and *then*, but *not before*, they go in with him to the marriage. Then the *door*³ *is shut*, and the marriage is completed; that is, Christ receives the kingdom.

Thus it is seen that the events mentioned in the text are not all accomplished at once; but after the first event referred to takes place (namely, "while they went to buy, the bridegroom came",) the whole period of the ministry in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary is necessarily thrown in *before* we come to the next event; which is, "And they that were *ready* went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." Here is where the mistake is generally made in the application of the parable; and from what has been set forth, it can be readily seen why only those who have correct views of the sanctuary subject can give a consistent explanation of the parable of the ten virgins.

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Where, then, are we in the fulfillment? Let us recapitulate: The great Advent movement from 1840-44, was the fulfillment of that part of the parable which represents the virgins as going forth to meet the bridegroom. In the spring of 1844, the time first set passed by, and the bridegroom tarried and the virgins slumbered. In the midsummer of 1844, the midnight cry was made. In the autumn

of 1844, the days ended, and the bridegroom came to the marriage. Then that work commenced which must come in before the marriage itself can take place; namely, the cleansing of the sanctuary, or, which is the same thing, the examination of the guests. The door cannot be shut till this work is done, and those who are found ready will then go in to the marriage. The door is still open; and other guests may come till this work in the most holy place of the sanctuary is finished. We are now in this period of the examination of the guests, which is to determine who *is* ready to go in with him to the marriage. More than forty-four years of this time are already in the past; and the work must soon be brought to a close, and the great question be decided who among the guests is "ready" to go in to the marriage, and who, not being found with the wedding garment on, is to be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness. The time for the marriage is at hand. Those who are ready will then go in; and the door will be shut.

As the going in with him to the marriage is a future event, it becomes a matter of special interest to inquire what it will be. On this point we have the following facts to guide us:-

1. The marriage takes place in heaven, not on this earth; for it is in heaven that Christ receives his kingdom before his second coming.

2. It takes place before any of the saints are translated

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to heaven; hence they enter in with him to the marriage, not literally, but in some accommodated sense.

3. No one can go in with him to the marriage till the marriage takes place; and that does not occur till Christ has finished his work as priest in the sanctuary. The going in with him could not therefore have taken place in 1844.

4. No person can go in to the marriage until he is pronounced "ready;" and that decision cannot be rendered till all cases are decided in the sanctuary above, and probation is ended. The time when those who are ready go in to the marriage, is therefore at that moment of supreme importance when their probation closes, and when all probation closes; for after that the door is shut.

Let us then look at some scriptures which point out the experience and condition of the church at this time, and mark what they indicate.

The apostle Peter, in Acts 3:19, speaks of the time when sins shall be blotted out (which we know is at the conclusion of the sanctuary work,) and says that then "times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." The Lord then comes particularly near to his people, just as their sins are blotted out, and they pass the line of their probation. Then the time has come for them to go in with him to the marriage.

Again, the same apostle, in his second epistle (1:19) speaks as follows: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye make heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." According to this testimony, a time is coming (looking, we believe, to this same time, when the living righteous successfully pass the investigative judgment) when the day-star will

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arise in the hearts of God's people, the day will dawn to them, and they will receive such an unction from on high, and such an illumination of the Holy Spirit, that they will no longer need the word of prophecy, the light of the holy Scriptures, to guide their steps. They will themselves be an embodiment of the spirit of prophecy, and be enlightened with greater light than the prophets have ever been able to impart to them. In regard to what is meant by the day-star which is to arise in their hearts, we read in one of the promises to the overcomer (Rev. 2:28,) "And I will give him the morning star." This must be the same as the "day-star" of Peter's epistle. Before the Revelation was finished, Jesus, speaking of himself, said to John, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Rev. 22:16. To the overcomer, then, Christ promises to give himself. How does he do this? *Ans.* - To the last church, the Laodicean, he says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20. This denotes a state of union with Christ that no church has ever yet enjoyed.

Consider the bearing of all these scriptures, and the condition of the church at this time. The saints are past probation; their sins are blotted out; they are accepted; a refreshing from the presence of the Lord is upon them; the day has dawned to them; they no longer need the light of the Scriptures to guide them; the day-star, the bright and morning star, has arisen in their hearts; and their union with Christ is so complete that they are represented as supping with him and he with them, as friend holds converse with friend at the festal board; they are enraptured with the presence of the Lord; they know his position, and understand his

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every movement; they are full of Holy Ghost, as Stephen was; and as that protomartyr looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55,) so this remnant church, through the divine illumination that is then upon them, behold Jesus their King when he receives from the Father honor, majesty, and power, glory, and dominion, when, amid all the pomp and splendor of the heavenly world, he is crowned Lord of lords, and King of kings. And when, thus enraptured, they behold this scene in the heavenly world, what is this but their going in with him to the marriage? It must be this. The time, the place, the circumstances, the scriptures quoted, and the condition of the church at that time, all hold us to this conclusion.

Such is the wonderful period of blessing and exaltation and glory before the faithful. Who will share it? - They who are "ready". All depends upon this. Are we ready? This is the question we should ever address to our own hearts, as we seek with unceasing endeavor to give sure heed to the counsel of the faithful and true Witness, who now enjoins us (Rev. 3:18) to buy of him the white raiment - the wedding garment - that we may be prepared for that time just at hand when the King shall come in to see if we have that garment on or not, and the investigative judgment of the sanctuary shall test our fitness for the overcomer's reward.

"Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us." Who are the foolish virgins? If the virgins as a whole represent all those who become

interested in the great Advent movement, and are called out by it, the wise are those who follow the true light in regard to it, and the foolish those who walk in darkness, and adopt unscriptural positions relative to that event. There are, alas! many such in the land. But before we

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speaking particularly of these, mention should be made of still another class, and that is, those represented by the man who, though he had come to the wedding, was found without a wedding garment. Matt. 22:11. This man represents those who receive the truth, have the true light, understand in regard to the sanctuary subject and the marriage, and all the truth of this important time, and yet hold that truth only theoretically, and are not sanctified through it, nor prepared by it for the judgment. Such will finally be rejected, and meet a sadder fate than if they had never had a place among the wise virgins at all. They find themselves among the foolish virgins at last, and the most foolish of all that company.

After probation ends, the foolish virgins becoming aware, seemingly, that their condition is not right, begin earnestly to seek the Lord for help. This move on their part is represented in the parable by their coming and saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." They apparently expect to find admittance; but it is denied them. Probation is past, but they know it not; the door is shut, but they are not aware of it. They have rejected the clearest light and truth, till the day of grace is ended. These are some of those, at least, who are mentioned in Matt. 7:21, 23: "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. 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?" "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Ah! that is the trouble. While professing to serve God, they have worked "iniquity;" which word means

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"lawlessness." - "Depart from me, ye law-breakers." They have been the enemies of God's holy law; they have despised his Sabbath; they have refused to reverence his sanctuary; they have rejected the special truths of God sent forth to perfect his church in these last days; they have been willfully blind to the light, and the willing servants of sin; their interpretation of prophecy has been the reckless imaginings of their own hearts, their light, the sparks of their own kindling, and the Lord does not know them. One of the saddest conditions in the whole domain of religious experience is this state of self-deception into which many will fall, and the terrible disappointment to which they are doomed at last.

Such is the light this parable of the ten virgins throws upon our present position, such the important lesson we believe the Lord designed through it to impress upon us. Will we walk in the light, and profit by the lesson? O to be "ready!" Upon this condition all depends; and we know not when the test will pass upon us.

"O! where is this mysterious bourn

By which each path is crossed;
Beyond which God himself hath sworn
That he who goes is lost?"

The man in the parable of Matthew 22, who was found upon examination without the wedding garment on, when asked why he was in that condition, had nothing to say; he was "speechless." And if when the decision of our cases takes place, we are found unprepared, what will be our excuse? The case of this man is presented to show us that we will have no excuse. Did we not know that we were near the end? - Yes. Did we not know that in the illustration of the parable we were in the solemn time of the examination of the guests? -

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Yes. Did we not know that Christ was about to cease to plead as Mediator between God and men in the sanctuary on high? - Yes. Did we not know that our cases must soon come up for examination and decision? - Yes. Did we not have the wedding garment - a robe washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb - offered us without money and without price? - Yes. Did not the faithful and true Witness warn us that we were not ready, and earnestly urge upon us the necessity of buying this robe of him? - Yes. Then why, it may be asked of us, if, despising all this knowledge, we refuse to prepare - why have you come in hither without a wedding garment? Why did you suffer yourself to come to this decisive hour unprepared? What would we have to say? What excuse would we be able to give? Every soul under these circumstances before that tribunal will be struck dumb with an insupportable sense of shame and guilt.

But we need not be in this condition. Thank God, it is yet possible for us to be found "ready" when the decisive hour shall come. "They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut." Enough light has been given to lead us to the requisite preparation, if we will walk in it. We may share in the great refreshing which is just before the church, and find our path growing brighter and brighter till it ends in the perfect day. May He who looks upon his struggling children with more than a father's pity and a mother's love, enable us thus to do.

"An answer from the skies is sent -
Yet that from God depart,
While it is called to-day, repent,
And harden not your heart."

¹ The days were to date from the beginning of the work of restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25;) but Ezra and his company did not arrive at Jerusalem till the fifth month (Ezra 7:8;) and certainly they could not have employed less than two months in locating themselves, and getting ready to build, which would carry the date into the seventh month.

² This appears from the type itself; for even while the high priest was in the most holy place, sinners could come up around the sanctuary, and by manifesting their penitence in the appointed way, secure an interest in the work going on in the most holy, even though there was no ministration in the first apartment, or holy place.

³ This is the "door" mentioned in the parable, and is what may be called, perhaps, "the door of mercy," as the shutting of it brings an end to all offers of mercy. It has no connection with the door either of the holy or most holy place of the sanctuary, spoken of above.