

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 28 September 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Closed Door

Matthew 25:1-14

Before we read our passage of Scripture, I would like to paint a scene for you—a scene from a time and place long ago. The time is the first century A.D.; and the place is a village in the hills of northern Israel. It is evening time; and in a little house there in the village, family members are expectantly crowded together in the flickering light of the oil lamps. The occasion that has brought them together at this late hour is a wedding. A hush settles over the gathering, as the rabbi calls everyone to attention; and the bride and groom join hands.

Now, to our Western mind, this may seem a bit strange; but this young couple is, in fact, *already married*. For about a year, they have been “betrothed” (meaning that they are married “on paper”); yet, in all that time, they have not known each other physically. Since the day of their betrothal, the bride has been living in *her* father’s house; and the bridegroom has been living in *his* father’s house: and both of them have been busy. During this past year, the groom has purchased building materials, and has added another partition to his father’s house, so that he and his bride can live there together one day. As for the bride, she has made her wedding dress, and has prepared herself and her bridesmaids for the wedding ceremony. For a while now, all these preparations have been finished; and the only thing they’ve been waiting for is the permission from the groom’s father to go ahead with the wedding. But now, that moment has finally come. Several hours ago, shortly after dark, the father told his son, “Go get your bride”; and quickly, the young man gathered his bridal party, and travelled across the village, to the bride’s house. They are now in the bride’s house, where they are making their vows to each other.

Now, what will come *after* the wedding ceremony? **The wedding feast!** As soon as the vows are finished, the wedding party will swiftly move back across the village, to the groom’s father’s house, to hold the wedding feast there. However, by the time they get to the groom’s house, more people will have joined the wedding party. You see, while the wedding ceremony was in progress in the bride’s house, the groom’s servants went out into the streets of the village, and blew trumpets, and made the announcement that very soon, the bridal party will be moving from the bride’s house to the groom’s house; and all who wish to be there for the wedding feast must be prepared, in a moment, to join the party. Now, no one knows exactly when the bride and groom will come out of the house, and make their journey across the village. It may be another hour, or two, or three. All they know is that they must be ready—because once the bridal party is in the father’s house, the door will be shut; and from that point forward, *no one* will be allowed to enter. Should anyone arrive late for the feast, he will be left weeping outside the door.

What I've just described to you is the actual way that wedding ceremonies were conducted in Galilee, where Jesus grew up. Particularly, the part about the shutting of the door, and no one's being allowed to enter, was unique to culture of Galilee. Being shut out from a wedding feast would have been disgraceful and heartbreaking; yet, that was the custom. You *had to be ready*, or else you missed the feast. This morning, we will see how Jesus used this Galilean custom to illustrate some important truths about His return to earth, and about the "wedding feast" that will take place here on earth, just after He returns. The title of this message is ***The Closed Door***.

Read Matthew 25:1-13.

I. The careful and the careless bridesmaids (vv. 1-5)

If you were here when I was preaching through **Matthew 13**, you'll remember that at that point in Christ's ministry, He had told seven parables about "***the kingdom of heaven***." Now, just to remind you, when Christ spoke of "***the kingdom of heaven***," He wasn't talking about the city of Heaven. "***The kingdom of heaven***" is *not* the heavenly New Jerusalem, where Christ is now seated on His throne. No, the "***kingdom of heaven***" it is a literal, physical, visible kingdom that Christ will establish here on earth, after He returns to earth. For 1,000 years, Christ will personally rule here on earth, from His throne in Jerusalem; and His government will be one of perfect righteousness, with no corruption or injustice of any kind. For 1,000 years, there will be no war, or nation rising against nation. There will be no violence in the animal kingdom. The curse on the ground will be removed, and there will be an abundance of food. People will live for hundreds of years, just as they did before the Flood. It will be a time of unparalleled peace, prosperity, and righteousness. Now, some of you may be wondering, "But, Pastor, why is it called 'the Kingdom of *Heaven*, if it will be here on *earth*?' " It is called "the Kingdom of Heaven" because this kingdom will literally come down *from heaven*. The *King Himself* will descend from Heaven with all His saints and angels, and will personally establish this glorious kingdom here on earth.

With this in mind, let's look at **verse 1**. In this verse, Jesus is introducing a parable; and He begins this parable the same way that He introduced all those "***kingdom of heaven***" parables back in **Matthew 13**. He says, "***The kingdom of heaven is like***." This means that Jesus is about to illustrate some truth about what it will be like in the period of time between His *first* coming to earth, and His *second* coming to earth. Jesus had *already* given many illustrations of what it will be like between His first and second comings; but this time, He is illustrating events that will be happening *at the very time* of His return.

Now, how do I know that Jesus is talking about His *second coming* in this parable, and not the Rapture? Well, first of all, you need to remember that up to this point, *the doctrine of the*

Rapture had not yet been revealed. The Lord didn't reveal the truth about the Rapture until 20 years later, to the Apostle Paul. Christ had given some little *hints* about the Rapture, which the disciples were able to understand *later*; but *no one* yet understood that Christ would catch up church-age saints to Heaven, seven years prior to His actual second coming to earth.

Now, lest you're still not sure that Jesus is talking about His *second coming* in this parable, please take a look at the very first word in **verse 1**. Jesus says, "***Then shall the kingdom of heaven be like.***" That word "***then***" (the Greek word *tóte*) means just what it sounds like: it means "at that time." But *what* time is He talking about? To know what time He's referring to, we need to go back and look at what Jesus had just said. Let's read **Matthew 24:48-51** again. **(Read Matthew 24:48-51.)**

In this parable of the wicked servant, Jesus was clearly talking about His *second coming* to earth. Christ won't execute judgment on the hypocrites at the time of the *Rapture*: the Rapture is simply the time when Christians of this present church age will be caught up in the air to be with the Lord. Christ's *second coming*—His actual return to *earth*—is the time when hypocrites will be judged, slain, and cast into hell, at the Judgment of the Nations. It will be a time of "***weeping and gnashing of teeth,***" as those who rejected Christ during the Tribulation face their doom.

And so, this parable is illustrating what it will be like at the time *immediately before* Christ's return to earth. With this in mind, let's look closely at the people in this parable. Let's read **verse 1** again. **(Read Matthew 25:1.)**

In this parable, Jesus likens the events surrounding His second coming to "***ten virgins***" who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now, why did these virgins go to "***meet***" the bridegroom? Well, remember the Jewish custom: these "virgins" are friends and acquaintances of the bride and groom, who wish to join them in their wedding feast. These virgins weren't present for the wedding ceremony itself: that was for the bride and groom, and immediate family. But now that the wedding is nearly over, they want to join in the wedding feast. They've heard the announcement that the wedding party will be coming out of the bride's house anytime now; and so, they must be ready to get up quickly, and join them.

Who, then, do these "virgins" represent? Well, to answer that question, we first need to know who the *bride and groom* are. The **Bridegroom** is Christ; and the bride is the body of **New Testament saints**, who were caught up to meet the Lord in the Rapture. Throughout the New Testament, the Apostles stated, again and again, that we church-age saints are Christ's bride. Right now, we are "betrothed" to Him; but we are not in His physical presence, in Heaven. One day, though, that will change. On the day of the Rapture, we *will* be brought into His

presence. *That* will be our wedding day; and the “wedding ceremony” will take place in Heaven, while the seven-year Tribulation period is taking place down on earth. However, immediately after the close of those seven years, Christ will return to earth with His bride, to set up His Kingdom; and the *Kingdom age* will be the time of the “wedding feast.”

So, this brings us back to the question: **who are these ten virgins?** Clearly, they are not church-age saints; so, who are they? These virgins represent **Jewish people** who will *make a profession of faith in Christ* during the Tribulation period. *How* will they have come to make a profession of faith in Christ? Well, remember: just after the Rapture, the world will be in a state of shock. (Seeing millions of people disappear would shake you, would it not?) The Jewish people (like everyone else) will be scared out of their wits, and will be seeking answers; and God will *give* them His answer. Almost immediately after the Tribulation period has begun, God will raise up two mighty men, called “**the two witnesses**,” to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem; and very shortly after that, God will raise up **144,000 Jewish men** to preach the Gospel throughout the whole world. Countless Jews (as well as Gentiles) will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of their preaching. These new believers will also come to understand, through these men’s preaching, that very soon, the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ, will *return* to earth. And so, like virgins going out to meet the Bridegroom, these believers will “go forth” to meet Christ and His bride. They will be eagerly awaiting Christ’s return to earth, at the end of the Tribulation.

However, as we’ve seen in the parable, there was a problem. Five of these ten virgins had oil in their lamps, and were ready to go; but the other five did *not* have oil. Now, to us, this may not sound like a problem; but in the world before electric lightbulbs, that *would have* been a problem. To walk through dark, narrow streets, you had to have a lamp. What does this mean, then? Well, throughout the Bible, oil is a picture of the **Holy Spirit**. In **1 John 2:27**, John wrote to believers, “***But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.***” In **Ephesians 1:13**, Paul says that after a person believes on Christ, he is “***sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.***” Every true believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit of God in him; and just as burning oil gives light, so the Holy Spirit gives the light of spiritual understanding to every believer. What would it mean, then, if someone do *not* have the Holy Spirit? It means that that person is not truly saved! A person may make a *profession* of faith in Christ: but if he have not the Holy Spirit, then his profession of faith is not real, and he does not know the Lord.

Read Romans 8:5-9.

Multitudes of Jews (and Gentiles, as well) will truly believe on Christ during the Tribulation; yet, there will be many among the number of professing believers who will *not* have truly

repented of their sin, and surrendered their lives to Christ. Many professing believers will probably gather into communities, and go into hiding from the Antichrist, and share whatever food and material necessities they can find; but not all among them will truly be saved.

Now, how is this possible? How is it that, during the terrible days of the Tribulation, when deadly enemies are everywhere, and death is on every side, there would be *any* fake believers? You'd think that *everyone* would either be squarely on Antichrist's side, with the mark of the Beast to prove it, or clearly on *Christ's* side, with *no* mark to prove it (except the "mark" of the Holy Spirit living inside them). For the most part, this will probably be true; yet, there *will* be fake believers—just as there are fake believers among us today.

Even in the direst times of persecution in the last 2,000 years, there have always been fake believers among the true ones; and in time, they usually show their true colours. That is why, in **Hebrews 12:15**, Paul warned Christians to look diligently among themselves, "***Lest any man fail of the grace of God***" (in other words, "lest any of you are not truly saved, and have not truly received God's grace"). Folks, this parable is addressed to people who will living during the future Tribulation period; but there is a *clear application* to us, today! If *you* have not truly surrendered your life to Christ—or if you aren't *sure* whether you truly belong to Christ—don't put this matter off. Get it settled! Don't be afraid of what believers would think if they found out that all this time, you weren't really saved. They would be *overjoyed* to know that you *were* lost, but now have been found. Repent and believe on Christ today!

II. The cry for the bridegroom (v. 6)

(Read Matthew 25:6 again.) At this point in the parable, we see that the friends of the groom made a cry in the streets of the city. They said, "***Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.***" Now, what does this "cry" represent? It represents the "cry" of God's witnesses during the Tribulation, that Christ's coming is very, very near. This is very much like the cry of the Apostles, while Christ was on earth. What did Christ commission the Apostles to preach as they went throughout the cities of Israel? They were to cry, "***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!***" Sad to say, very few people responded to that cry, and prepared themselves to receive their King; and because Israel, as a nation, rejected Christ as their King, the Kingdom of Heaven was postponed, and Israel was scattered from their land for many centuries. It will be much like this during the Tribulation, as the two witnesses, and 144,000 witnesses, herald the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as the Apostles did when Christ was on earth, these men will cry, "***The kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent, and believe the Gospel!***" This time, though, there will be no *postponing* of the Kingdom because of Israel's unbelief. From the time that God's witnesses begin to cry that the King is at hand, it will be a very short time (a *maximum* of seven years) until Christ returns. At one point during the Tribulation (very *late* in the Tribulation, when things are especially dire, and God's

servants are in need of divine assistance), there will even be *angels* flying through the heavens, to every tribe and nation, and crying out that the time of judgment is at hand!

Read Revelation 14:1-12.

From the time that the announcement goes forth that the King is at hand, the time will be very short. People won't have decades ahead of them to fool around, and enjoy their sin a little more, before deciding to receive Christ as Saviour. The time *will* be at hand; and tragically, many will not be prepared. This brings me to our third point.

III. The crisis of the unprepared (vv. 7-9)

(Read Matthew 25:7-9 again.) When the time came for the guests to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, the wise virgins were prepared. However, the foolish virgins were completely *unprepared*; and because they were unprepared, they missed the wedding feast.

However, you'll notice that even the *wise* virgins had gotten a bit careless. According to **verse 5**, *all* these virgins "**slumbered and slept.**" That word "**all**" includes even the five wise virgins, who did have oil in their lamps. What does *this* mean, then? It means that even *believers* can "sleep," spiritually speaking. They're *saved*, and they have the Holy Spirit, and they can't *lose* their salvation; but they *have* lost their "**first love**" and zeal for the Lord. Believers can even slip back into worldly habits, to the point of appearing like unbelievers. That is why, in **Ephesians 5**, Paul said to *believers*, "**Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead** [this literally means, "rise up from among the dead ones"], **and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.**" Christians are not spiritually dead; but they *can sleep* spiritually, to the point of *appearing* as though they were spiritually dead. This is true now, during this church age; and it will be true during the Tribulation. Even during the Tribulation, it will be possible for genuine believers to "sleep." Perhaps they'll become so focused on survival, that they'll stop spending real time with the Lord. Perhaps they'll become bitter about the death of loved ones all around them. Perhaps they'll simply start to give in to the lusts of the flesh, as *any* believer can do. Either way, though, they will stop anticipating the return of their Lord to the extent that they should. There is a warning in this for *us*, brethren! *Don't sleep!* Don't be ashamed when Christ appears, because you have been harbouring bitterness, or playing around with "little" sins. Be ready to stand before the Bridegroom with your lamp trimmed and shining brightly!

Even **the wise virgins** were sleeping when the announcement went out that the bridegroom was coming; yet, they *did* have the oil in their lamps, and they *did* enter the wedding feast. Likewise, some believers during the Tribulation will “doze off” spiritually, for a time; yet, they *will* have the oil of the Holy Spirit; and they *will* enter the “door” of the Kingdom.

On the other hand, **the foolish virgins** were not prepared at all; and they did not enter the feast. When the cry went out, they frantically asked the *wise* virgins if they could borrow oil from them; but the wise virgins were not able to share their oil with them. The foolish virgins *tried* to go out and get oil; but where were they going to find an oil vendor in the middle of the night? It simply was too late to prepare. Likewise, many fake believers during the Tribulation will find themselves out of time. After years of hardening their hearts, they will not be able, at the last minute, to sit down with a believer, and go through the Gospel, and prepare their hearts to receive Christ. Nor will they be able to have a believer “vouch” for them at the Judgment of the Nations. No believer will be able to stand before Christ and say, “This guy is my friend, Lord. Yes, he was unsaved, and didn’t have the Holy Spirit; but he did live in our Christian community, and he didn’t take the mark. So, could you let him in, for my sake?” Such a thing will not happen. *Every individual* will be responsible for himself.

My friends, I’ve known the Lord for 42 years now; and in those years, I’ve met many people who *thought* they are saved because they had a Christian mom who loved the Lord, or a grandmother who taught a Sunday School class, or a dad or brother who was a pastor or Sunday School teacher. Many people *assume* that they are Christians because they have always been within the “Christian community,” and have attended church all their lives. My friend, if this be what *you* have always assumed, I am here to tell you that you *must* be born again! You must personally repent of your sin, and *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ!

Many people who will be living at the very end of the Tribulation will find themselves out of time, and will end up in hell. “But, Pastor, won’t they be able to pray a quick prayer, and ask Christ to save them, even if it *is* just before Christ bursts through the clouds? Isn’t salvation that simple, and immediate?” Yes, salvation *is* that simple, and it *is* that immediate, for those who truly repent of their sins, and put their complete trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. (The thief on the cross was truly saved at the eleventh hour of his life.) However, you can’t come to Jesus on *your* terms. You can’t come to Him any old time you please, and you’ve had all the “fun” you want to have. There is a time to receive God’s gift of salvation—and that time is *now*, while the Holy Spirit is convicting you of your sin, and drawing you to true repentance, and opening your eyes to the truth, and wooing you to come to Christ. Jesus said, “**No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.**” If you are not saved, and you *know* that the Lord is speaking to your heart today, please respond to Him!

IV. The closing of the door (vv. 10-13)

(Read Matthew 25:10-13 again.) When the midnight cry went out, the foolish virgins hurried out into the morning darkness to try to find someone, *anyone*, who would sell them oil; but it was too late. While they were scurrying around, the wedding party went into the groom's house; and the door was shut.

Now, what does the closing of the door mean? Well, it means two things—depending on whether you are saved, or unsaved. For the saved, the “closing of the door” will mean peace and security in Christ's glorious, 1000-year Kingdom. When the door shuts, the saved will be on the *right* side of the door. After the Judgment of the Nations, all who believed on Christ (whether during the Tribulation period, or in the past ages) will enter into the Kingdom. Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, and Tribulation martyrs will be in their resurrected bodies; and those who were saved during the Tribulation, yet never died physically, will remain in their natural bodies until the end of the 1,000-year Kingdom, when they will finally receive their resurrection bodies. However, *only believers* will enter the Kingdom. For believers, the closing of the door will mean entry into a life of painless life, and untold beauty. The 1,000 years before them will be ***“the marriage supper of the Lamb,”*** of which the prophets foretold. It will be a time of feasting and gladness in the presence of the Lord.

Read Isaiah 26:6-9.

Read Revelation 19:1-16.

We've seen what the closing of the door will mean for believers. But what will it mean for *unbelievers*? What will it mean for those who were believers in *name*, but who were never truly saved? It will mean banishment from the Kingdom. It will mean ***“weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,”*** in the place of outer darkness, fire, and torment, which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Many people who lived in Christ's day, and who actually sat under His preaching, yet never truly believed on Him, will be able to see the bliss and happiness of the Kingdom, from their place in hell; and they will cry out, “Lord, we know you! You preached in our streets! You sat down in our homes, and we ate with you, and talked with you face-to-face. Please open the door of the Kingdom to us!” But Jesus will say, “I never knew you.” Many people who lived during the church age will say, “Lord, we went to church! We didn't drink, or smoke. We were good livers. We were Sunday School teachers, and pillars in our community.” Many priests and other clergy will even think that they had the ability to cast out demons. They will say, “We cast out devils in your name, Lord!” Many who lived during the Tribulation will say, “Lord, we belonged to the messianic community, and we never took the mark of the Beast! Let us in, Lord!” But Jesus will say, “I never knew you.” He won't say, “I *once* knew you; but you fell into sin, and lost your salvation; and now I don't know you anymore.” No, He will say, “I never knew you!”

As we close this morning, I would like to take you to two last passages of Scripture.

Read Luke 13:22-30.

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

Conclusion: My friend, which side of the door will you be on when Christ returns? Which side of the door are you on *now*? Have you placed your faith in Christ? If not, now is the day of salvation! Run to Christ for salvation, and receive the oil of the Holy Spirit, so that when Christ appears, you will be with Him in glory! If you are saved already, I would ask: “Are you sleeping spiritually? Are your senses dulled to the things of the Lord, because your eyes are on some thing of this world? If so, awake, and let Christ give you light!