

Having examined the book of John through chapter 7—I thought I would take a break and preach a short typical series entitled—Pressing Questions—at present I have 7 questions—Am I a True Christian, Am I a Healthy Christian, Am I a Loving Husband, Am I a Submissive Wife, Am I a Good Parent, Am I an Obedient Child, and Am I a Helpful Sibling...

I. The Foolish Virgins (things that do not argue true religion)

II. The Wise Virgins (things that accompany true religion)

I. The Foolish Virgins (things that do not argue true religion)

1. Here I want to suggest from this parable, five things that DO NOT necessarily argue true and saving religion...
2. Now—before I come to this let me say a few brief words about this parable (the parable of the 10 virgins) in general...
3. [a] Its context—this parable is a part of a larger section that has to do with our Savior's second coming—it includes the whole of chapters 24-25...
4. This sermon is sometimes referred to as The Olivet Discourse, Matt.24:3—"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives..."
5. In chapter 24, He speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem, as shadowy or typical of the destruction of the world...
6. Chapter 25 has two parts—there are two parables in vv1-30, and then a detailed description of the final judgment (vv31-46)...
7. All in all—the entire discourse (chs.24-25) concerns the second coming of Christ, and the final judgment of all men...
8. [b] Its imagery—our Savior uses the imagery of a first century wedding—and 10 virgins or maidens in waiting..
9. These were similar to what we refer to as maid of honors—but according to this tradition, these ladies escorted the groom to the bride...
10. Thus—it was their task to WAIT for the groom, to meet Him, and to escort Him to the ceremony with lamps burning...
11. Our Savior describes 5 of these virgins as wise and 5 as foolish—the wise virgins had no extra oil, while the wise did (vv3-4)...
12. The bridegroom was delayed, and all 10 fell asleep—then suddenly, news came that he was on his way (v6)...
13. The foolish virgins ran out of oil, and are sent to purchase some—and as they are gone, the bridegroom comes (vv8-10)...
14. The foolish virgins return to find the door shut to the wedding feast (vv10-11)—they seek to enter but to no avail (v12)...
15. According to custom—the maidens (virgins) were to accompany the bridegroom to the ceremony with lamps...
16. Because they failed to be prepared for this event, they are refused access into the wedding, the door is shut to them...
17. Now—because this is a parable, I don't think it's wise to make every part mean something—that would make it an allegory...
18. But parables are not allegories—parables are usually intended to teach a basic truth and not give many details...
19. Thus—I personally don't think it's necessary to answer every question, such as—did the foolish virgins have any oil at all, where were the virgins waiting, all why did all 10 sleep...
20. [c] Its purpose, v13—"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming..."
21. In other words—the primary point of this parable, is to warn professing Christians to be ready for Christ's return...

22. And the primary reason they must be ready is—there will be some who will not, who will be found hypocrites...
23. They may have talked like the rest, and in many ways looked like the rest—but they were very different from the rest...
24. And how are they to be found ready—they must become truly wise virgins, with sufficient oil in their lamps...
25. Thus—I trust it's obvious—that by wise virgins is meant TRUE Christians, and by foolish virgins is meant FALSE Christians...
26. All 10 were supposedly waiting for Christ's return—all were professing Christians—but only 5 were true Christians...
27. This is the primary purpose of this parable—there are many foolish virgins within the best of Christian churches...
28. And our blessed Savior, would have every professing Christian, to examine themselves to see where they stand...
29. He taught this parable for two reasons—that foolish virgins be exposed, and that wise virgins would be encouraged...
30. J.C. Ryle—"I believe the ten virgins represent the two great classes which compose the visible Church of Christ, the converted and the unconverted, the false professors and the real Christians, the hypocrites and the true believers..."
31. Now—before I go any further—let me underscore that our Savior taught many other parables with a similar purpose...
32. The parable of The Sower, The parable of the Two Builders, and The parable of the Talents, all describe professing Christians who in fact were not TRUE Christians...
33. Thus the fact is this—our Savior knew there would be professing Christians in churches, who were not true Christians...
34. He not only taught this through parables, but plain teaching, where he describes true and false Christianity...
35. Thus—what I want to do under this first heading is—suggest several things that do NOT argue true religion...
36. [1] Christian profession—that is—a person professes they are Christian, through baptism and church membership...
37. A person can be baptized, a member of a faithful and sound church, and yet, for all that, remain a foolish virgin...
38. These 10 virgins, were all waiting for the same bridegroom—they were all professing virgins—they were all one...
39. So too—all local churches have those within it, who profess to be Christian, but in fact, are but professing Christians...
40. That is—they have been baptized, added to the church—they have publically aligned themselves with Christ...
41. They worship alongside the rest of the people, they claim to love God, and they profess to be waiting for Christ...
42. Now—and this is very important—some of these people may know they are not converted, and others may not...
43. That is—it's very possible for such people to be deceived—they think they are Christian, and yet are foolish virgins...
44. Matt.7:22-23—"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness..."
45. Let me clarify—while you can be a church member and not a Christian, you can't be a Christian and reject the church...
46. We live in a day when the church is treated as optional—as if you can have the Head, and yet reject His body...
47. My friends—surely you realize these two go together—Christ can never be separated from His body (church)...

48. A person with little if any interest in the church, is at best a very poor Christian, and is at worst, a false Christian...
49. These foolish virgins, though they lacked oil for their lamps, were nevertheless, present alongside the wise virgins...
50. [2] Orthodox theology—that is—you can be thoroughly orthodox in our creed and beliefs, and not be a true Christian...
51. Matt.25:11—"Afterward the other virgins came also saying, Lord, Lord open to us"—Kurios, Kurios (lit. Lord or Master)...
52. This Greek word can merely mean lord or sir, but when applied to Christ, it's a divine title meaning Sovereign One...
53. Matt.7:21—"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven..."
54. That is—not every person who has an orthodox creed goes to heaven, but those who believe and obey Christ...
55. Now—surely, no person is a true Christian who denies the Lordship of Christ—that Christ is the God-Man...
56. But—and this is my primary point—you can be as orthodox as John Calvin—and yet, not be a TRUE Christian...
57. V12—"But he answered and said, Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you"—that is—know you as to love you...
58. Brethren—we understand that when Scripture speaks about us knowing God—it refers to a intimate knowledge...
59. These foolish virgins knew much about God—but my dear friends, they did not know God, and neither did He know them...
60. 2Tim.3:7—"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"—that is—a saving knowledge...
61. 1Cor.13:2—"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing..."
62. There is no doubt that Paul here is describing the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, that were temporary in nature...
63. He does so to make an important point—great gifts, even extraordinary ones, without oil in the lamp, profits no one...
64. 1Cor.13:3—"And though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing"—that is—die for the truth...
65. [3] External morality—that is—a person can be outwardly moral and decent, and yet remain a foolish virgin...
66. It's for this reason, there was nothing externally that distinguished the foolish virgins from the wise virgins...
67. My friends—simply put, a person can stop doing many openly wicked things, and imitate the activities of Christians...
68. That is—externally, they're doing the very same things true Christians do—they learn the language of God's people...
69. They sound and act LIKE Christians—they can even pray very eloquently—some even have apparent gifts...
70. Matt.7:22-23—"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you..."
71. Now—I can further illustrate this in Judas Iscariot—who walked with Christ and did many things for Christ...
72. There was nothing in Judas that caused the others to doubt his sincerity—he looked and sounded just like the other disciples...
73. He associated with wise virgins, looked and acted like wise virgins, but all the while, he was a foolish virgin...

74. [4] Religious feelings—that is—you can have all sorts of religious emotions (feelings) and remain a foolish virgin...
75. Now—by religious emotions or feelings I mean, emotions or feelings felt as you think about religious things...
76. These are things that professing Christians often experience, but do not argue true religion—let me suggest two—sorrow and joy...
77. SORROW—that is, sorrow or conviction for sin does NOT necessarily argue, the presence of true and saving religion...
78. 2Cor.7:10—"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death..."
79. JOY—that is, you can have a joy and peace, you can have religious goosebumps, and yet be a foolish virgin...
80. Matt.13:20—"He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while..."
81. In other words—he was a temporary believer—he was not a true believer—and yet he received the word with joy...
82. A person can have a joy, and yet be a foolish virgin—a person can raise their hands in worship with tears of joy, and yet be a foolish virgin...
83. My dear friends, I've known many people who have wept tears of sorrow and joy, who no longer walk with Christ...
84. Now—historically, Reformed Christians have distinguished between the Spirit's work upon and within a person...
85. [a] The Spirit's work upon a person—that is—the Holy Spirit works upon people that He never intends to save...
86. CHS—"God the Holy Spirit may work in men some good desires and feelings, and yet have no design of saving them. But mark, none of these feelings are things that accompany salvation, for if so, they would be continued..."
87. Heb.6:4-6—"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance..."
88. [b] The Spirit's work within a person—that is—He takes up residency within the soul permanently and eternally...
89. Robert Murray McCheyne—"Their lamps went out because they had no oil. They burned for a while, as a dry wick will do, often with a great blaze; but soon the flame decays, and it goes out for lack of oil. This is the case with hypocrites. They have no spring of gracious oil within their hearts. The Spirit of God often comes upon them, but he does not dwell in them..."

II. The Wise Virgins (things that accompany true religion)

1. Having provided four things that do not argue the presence of true religion, I want to suggest some things that do...
2. This parable suggests two things about the wise virgins that I want to briefly examine, and then suggest three marks of a TRUE Christian...
3. [1] They are wise and not foolish—the Holy Spirit of Christ, has changed them from foolish to wise virgins...
4. By nature—we are born foolish, and by grace, we are reborn wise—our eyes are opened up, we see the truth...
5. This is another fundamental difference between these two groups—the wise virgins were changed by grace...
6. All throughout the Old and New Testaments, true wisdom is associated with Christ—He is the Wisdom of God...
7. 1Cor.1:30—"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption..."

8. Christ is our Wisdom in that, He has changed us from being foolish to wise—He has opened our blind eyes...
9. Christians are wise because they now see things as they truly are—they see God, Christ, sin, and themselves...
10. They now see this world as temporary, and the joys and pleasures of it passing—they know see things rightly...
11. Now—obviously, just be sure you rightly understand me, by wisdom is not meant the wisdom of this world...
12. Wise virgins may or may not be wise from a worldly perspective, in fact, oftentimes they lack the wisdom of this world...
13. But every true Christian is wise, in that they possess true knowledge and wisdom concerning eternal things...
14. Benjamin Keach—"Sin is the chiefest evil, and God is the chief good, and to know God truly in Christ, or with a saving knowledge, is true wisdom..."
15. [2] They have oil in their lamps, v3—"Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps..."
16. This means—those who have Christ, who have been made wise, have His Spirit with them, giving them oil...
17. Now—it can hardly be over-stressed, that it's the presence of the Spirit, that distinguishes wise from foolish virgins...
18. The Spirit doesn't merely work upon us, but He takes up residency within us—He fills our lamps with oil (grace)...
19. And He doesn't merely fill our lamps with oil, but He continually replenishes that oil, throughout this wilderness...
20. Thus—ultimately speaking, the oil in our parable, refers to the person and work of the Holy Spirit of Christ...
21. In short—the fundamental differences between a professing and true Christian, is that a true Christian is united to Christ and indwelt by His Spirit...
22. Thus—the presence of the Holy Spirit (this continued supply of oil, ensures the presence and continuation of three things...
23. [a] Faith in Christ—that is—they are no longer trusting in anything else but Christ, to save them from their sins...
24. This of course is the essence of folly—to trust in your own merits or works to be right with God—this is foolishness...
25. But wise virgins have come to see this as foolish—they've come to see their need for a better and perfect righteousness...
26. [b] Love for Christ—wise virgins (or true Christians), have had their spiritual eyes open to see Christ's beauty...
27. They love Him, and because they love Him, they love His word, His people, and His day—the Lord's Day...
28. Those who love Christ, love the places they find Christ—and Christ can be found in His word and in His church...
29. 1Cor.16:22—"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come"—wise virgins love Christ...
30. [c] Obedience to Christ—although all 10 were virgins by profession, the 5 wise ones were virgins in reality...
31. That is—they are pure in heart, Matt.5:8—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"—in heaven...
32. Only the pure in heart are allowed into the wedding feast—all others are turned away from seeing His face...
33. Put another way—only true spiritual and moral virgins enter heaven—only those whose hearts are made pure...

34. Rev.14:4—"These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb..."
35. [i] Foolish virgins—that is—those of you who know deep down within, that you have no oil in your lamps...
36. What I want to say to you is this—see this parable as the Lord's kindness to you, to expose you before it's too late...
37. You must view this parable as it is in fact, a mercy from Christ, He didn't give this parable because of hate but love...
38. Prov.1:20-23—"Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares...How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you..."
39. [ii] Wise virgins—that is—those of you who can, in some measure, conclude you trust, love, and obey Christ...
40. It's true—you don't trust, love, and obey Him as you desire—but, these are longings of your heart and soul...