

WHEN THE PATH RUNS OUT

There are two parables Jesus told that especially represent the condition of the last day church spoken of in **Revelation 3:14-22**, which is the church of Laodicea, better known as the lukewarm church, or the professed church. We might even call it the nominal church, or the pretend church, or the church that has “a form of godliness, but denies the power thereof.” That is, the power to stop sinning and to live the new life, even the life of Christ. Paul goes on to tell Timothy to turn away from such a church, and we should do the same, because it’s inspired counsel.

We should understand also that the church of Laodicea is a spiritual condition or a state and not any particular brick and mortar church or singular denomination that exists today, because many Christian churches fall into this category in these last days, and it’s imperative that we not remain in such a church if we want to keep from being spued out of God’s mouth.

These two parables I mentioned are the parable of the wheat and tares, which we studied about last time, and the parable of the ten virgins, and as we study about the ten virgins today, we’re going to find that both parables basically teach the same lesson.

The ten-virgin parable not only deals with the Advent movement during the early 1840’s, but also, and more importantly to us, is mentioned as being repeated in these last days. This parable has been preserved especially for our benefit in **Matthew 25**.

It is important to understand right from the start that this parable especially deals with the last days of this earth’s history, but how do we know that? We know that, because as **Matthew 24** progresses to the end of the chapter, it leads up to the events that take place just before the Lord’s coming. If you have already turned to **Matthew 25**, what is the first word in **verse 1**? THEN! What does “THEN” mean? It means “following next in order.” After the fulfillment of last day events given in **Matthew 24**, most of which have already been fulfilled, Matthew says, “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins.”

So let’s go ahead and read all the verses that deal with this parable in **Matthew 25:1-13** and then we’ll discuss it. “Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the

bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 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. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

Now let’s see what the Spirit of Prophecy says about this parable and how it applies to our day.

Review and Herald, August 19, 1890, “This parable has been and will be fulfilled to the very letter, for it has a special application to this time, and, like the third angel’s message, has been fulfilled and will continue to be present truth till the close of time.”

So, as we go through this ten-virgin parable, remember that it is present truth for us today! It’s not something we can relegate just to the experience of our Advent pioneers, and neither is it something we can put off solely to the future. It is something that is happening right now, and will be fulfilled to the very letter, just like it was in the past.

In this parable we find that there is a company made up of wise and foolish virgins, and at the very beginning of this parable, can we determine which are wise, and which are foolish? NO! Just like the wheat and tares, in the early stages you can’t tell the difference. They all profess to have a pure faith, that’s why they’re called virgins.

Now, if this parable is present truth today, who would represent the wise and foolish virgins? I’ll be reading from ***Manuscript Releases, volume 16, pages 268, 271*** where it says, “All the Christian world is represented in this parable . . . The ten virgins are represented as watching in the evening of this earth’s history. They represent the church of professed Christians,” which is actually the same as the Laodicean state, and we’ll read that later.

So, all the Christian world is represented in this company of wise and foolish virgins, but would that include Seventh-day Adventists? Yes! “All” means every person and every church that professes the Christian faith.

Now let me continue reading from ***Review and Herald, August 19, 1890***, “In the parable, the ten virgins had lamps, but only five of them had the saving oil with which to keep their lamps burning. This represents the condition of the church.” “The church” here, without question, is a reference to the Seventh-day Adventist church, because the

Review and Herald wasn't written for the whole Christian world, was it? No, it was written for the benefit of Seventh-day Adventists, and what she writes specifically applies to them.

In the parable Jesus said, "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." But before that it says they went forth to meet the bridegroom, which means they all professed to be followers of Christ. Then **verse 6** says, "And at midnight (**which represents great spiritual darkness, according to *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 414**) "And at midnight a cry was made: Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him."

Now, where were the virgins that they had to go out in order to meet the Bridegroom? They had to leave their respective churches that were in the Laodicean state, because all the various churches rejected the midnight cry, and that's exactly what happened in the early 1840s, and continues to happen, because this parable is present truth for each successive generation till the end of time. And so all the virgins went forth, because they wanted to be with Christ. But then the bridegroom tarried, which means Jesus didn't come when they expected Him to, and they all fell asleep. Even the wise? Yes! Even the wise fell asleep!

So all the virgins fell asleep, and they continued sleeping until when? Till midnight. So at midnight, or during a time of great spiritual darkness, and certainly this would apply to today, we see that there was a wake-up call to all the sleeping virgins. And it's important to note that the cry did not originate from within any of the churches, but from outside the churches. And we'll talk about who that outside group represents a little later.

Christ's Object Lessons, pages 405, 406 says, "In the scene upon which Christ looks, a company are awaiting the appearance of the bridal party, intending to join the procession."

Now, If you're waiting to join something, that means you're not part of it! And so we see that in addition to the company of the wise and foolish, there's another separate company made up of a procession.

Continuing on with ***Christ's Object Lessons*** it says, "Lingering near the bride's house are ten young women robed in white. Each carries a lighted lamp and a small flagon for oil. All are anxiously watching for the appearance of the bridegroom. But there is a delay. Hour after hour passes; the watchers become weary and fall asleep. At midnight the cry is heard, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.' The sleepers, suddenly awaking, spring to their feet. They see the procession moving on, bright with

torches and glad with music. They hear the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.”

So, what was this procession doing in relation to the company of the wise and foolish virgins? The procession was “moving on”, which means the virgins were being left behind. And at the very last point before all the virgins would be unable to join the procession, a cry was given in an effort to awaken them to their dire situation.

“Bright with torches” means there’s much light or present truth in the midst of the procession, and songs of praise, it says. And it’s important to notice that this present truth was found only within the procession, and not within any of the churches. Now, if much light and glorious music was in the procession, then what was in all the churches? Spiritual darkness and music that did not bring glory to God. Today we might say contemporary Christian rock, or repetitious and hypnotic praise music with uplifted hands waving in the air?

So, this company of ten virgins hears the voice of the bridegroom, and who is the bridegroom? Christ. And they also hear the voice of the bride, and who is the bride of Christ?

Manuscript Release, Volume 16, page 277 says, “The church is the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” And of course the Lamb is Jesus. And so, if Christ and His bride, the church; and by the way, the word church means “a calling out.” If Christ and His bride are the two entities that make up the procession, then “the whole Christian world, which are represented by the ten virgins, must hurry up and join it or be lost.

In ***Upward Look, page 315*** it gives a very clear definition of Christ’s bride where it says, “God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt. 18:20). Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ’s church, for the presence of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church.”

So it’s very clear from this statement that only the presence of Christ can constitute His true church. Which means that Jesus isn’t coming back for building, and institutions, and organizations! He’s coming for a people who love Him and keep His commandments, and if a church doesn’t do that, then that church is not Christ’s church. If Christ is not there; it is not His church, regardless of what they profess. If Christ is not there, then

people have to leave and join the procession where Jesus is, and that's what the ten virgins were in the process of doing.

Now, when Ellen White says that all the Christian world is represented in this parable, that would have to include all the various churches that profess Christianity, and isn't it true that there are wise virgins in all the churches that are truly Christians? Yes. In fact, notice what it says in ***The Great Controversy, page 390***, "The great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion (**the context is the fallen Babylonian churches**). There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation. The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.'"

So, according to the parable, as the procession was moving on and leaving all the virgins behind, a cry was heard proclaiming a message of mercy to wake them up. And what was that message called? The midnight cry! The midnight cry was a message that announced the way of salvation. It said: Behold the Bridegroom, behold Christ! Get your eyes off man, off your denomination, off yourselves, off the world, and fix them on the Jesus. But is that the end of the message? NO! The first part of the message pointed the people to Christ, and the second part separated them from their churches of darkness to be with Christ. It was a complete message! It wasn't a message that pointed the people to Christ but said nothing about separating from their corrupt churches, nor was it a message to separate from their corrupt churches, but failed to point them to Jesus. So even though all the virgins had left their corrupt churches, at this point they had not yet joined the procession.

And so, the midnight cry was a message that pointed to Christ and told the people that they could not remain connected to their apostate churches, but had to go out in order to be with Christ. And what did this message do to the virgins when they heard it? They woke up, didn't they? Now think about that for a minute! There was no other message that could wake them out of their sleep except the midnight cry. A message that told them to look to Christ but not separate from their churches wouldn't wake them up. Neither would a message that told them to separate from their churches but not look to Christ. But when they heard both parts of the message combined in one complete

package, the virgins woke up and began to trim their lamps, or study their Bibles. **Psalm 119:105** says, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

If an oil lamp is allowed to burn overnight, black soot begins to gather inside the glass, and the more soot that builds, the less the light shines. And this is exactly what happened while the wise and foolish virgins were sleeping. They weren't studying as they should have been. The word of God did not burn as brightly in their hearts like it did before they fell asleep, and so they had to get back into the word. Sounds kind of like they lost their first love, doesn't it? So they began to clean away at the blackness, and as they trimmed their lamps the light began to grow brightly again, and it began to extend to a greater distance, and the more they cut away, the brighter the light became, and the better they could see.

Now, when all the virgins began to trim their lamps, could they be distinguished from each other at this point? No. All of them fell asleep, all of them woke up at the message, and they were all busy trimming their lamps. But it soon became apparent that there were two parties beginning to form from one that was once united. One party realized they had just enough oil to keep their lamps burning brightly so they could see to join the procession, whereas the other party begins to recognize that their oil supply is gone, because their flames began to flicker and went out.

The trimming away of the blackness is a symbol of cutting away the error from the understanding by studying the scriptures and of allowing the light of truth to shine into the darkened mind. Both the wise and foolish did this, and as they studied the truth of the midnight cry they were confirmed once again that leaving their various churches had been the right decision, and that indeed, God had a people outside the churches they left, but nevertheless, it looked as though the procession could very well leave them behind. They all professed to serve Christ, professed to be His followers, but the wise were able to prove their readiness to join the procession while the foolish were gone looking for more oil, because notice once again what it says in **Verses 8-10**, “And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 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.”

So, when the midnight cry warned the virgins that the procession was approaching, the foolish recognized they didn't have enough oil to make the journey. At first they went to the wise, and said “Give us some of your oil, and the wise said, “We can't!” In other

words, it's not possible. Now what does the oil represent? We should all know this. It's the Holy Spirit according to **Zechariah 4:6** and **Christ's Object Lesson, page 414**, but it also represents something else. What is it?

Testimonies to Ministers, pages 233, 234 says, "Now is the time for the careless to arouse from their slumber. Now is the time to entreat that souls shall not only hear the word of God, but without delay secure oil in their vessels with their lamps. That oil is the righteousness of Christ. It represents character, and character is not transferable. No man can secure it for another. Each must obtain for himself a character purified from every stain of sin."

The wise could not give their character to the foolish, because it's an individual matter. It's not something we can pass on to anyone else. And as a consequence, the foolish didn't have what it took to join the procession when the wise did. Instead, in a desperate effort to find oil they went to those who sell oil. Now where do you suppose would be the most logical place for the foolish virgins to buy oil? Wouldn't it be to those who claim to have the truth? Wouldn't that be the ministers, or religious leaders of the various churches? They probably went back to the churches they were attending before they joined the bridal party.

And so, the foolish virgins buy the snake oil that's being offered from the sellers and evidently they think they have purchased what they need to allow them to join the procession. Just a minute ago we read that what they needed was "a character purified from every stain of sin." And the oil being sold didn't teach that, and therefore taught salvation in sin. So the foolish buy the oil, but in the meantime something has happened. "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was **(what?)** shut." And when the foolish finally arrived, they began pounding on the door "saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." And it was too late for them. Not only was it too late, but there were only two options left for them to choose from; go back to their former apostate churches, or quit pretending and just go live like the rest of the world, and as we continue I think we'll find that some did one thing and some the other. And again, that's what happened when the midnight cry went forth in 1844. So when it's repeated to the very letter, that means it happens just that way once again.

So the experience of the wise is that they hear the message, they wake up at the message, they study the message to make sure it's true, and then they obey the message and hurry to join the procession before it moves on too far. But the experience of the foolish is a little different, but the difference is a big one! Like the wise virgins they hear

the message, they wake up at the message, they study the message and know it's true, but because of their lack of oil, or their lack of a righteous character, they are unable to join the procession.

At first the foolish virgins were frantic and distressed by their lack, but as their consciences are soothed by the sellers of oil, they become confident that they can yet catch up with the procession and still enter into the wedding festivities before it's too late, and perhaps they dilly-dallied along the way, because none of the ministers seemed to be alarmed, why should they! Or maybe, just maybe they got their oil from an independent ministry that was teaching there's no need to separate, because God is going to clean up the church! The ship is going through, so stay with the ship! And the sad part is, they have no clue at this point that it's already too late for them to enter in.

Now, when all the wise have left the various churches, and this has not yet been fully accomplished in this generation, I want to make that clear. Our job is to follow the message and then to give the message, and not to decide who are wise and who are foolish. It's just like the parable of the wheat and tares, it's the response to the message that binds them in bundles, and that's what will determine the fate of the individual, not you, not me. And I hope you agree with that. But when all the wise have left the various churches, what will be left in all the apostate churches of Christendom? Nothing but foolish virgins! That's all that's left when everyone has either obeyed or disobeyed the message. That's all that will be left in the Catholic Church, in all Protestant churches, and yes, in the Seventh-day Adventist church, because a church that is in the Laodicean state is not a part of the procession, and we'll talk more about that in a minute.

So, as this experience was true for the pioneers of Adventism when they first gave the second angels message in 1844, who do you suppose would especially be represented by the church of foolish virgins today, since the message is to be repeated? I submit to you that it will be the very one that has been called to give it to begin with, and here's why: ***Review & Herald, August 19, 1890*** says, "The state of the Church represented by the foolish virgins, is also spoken of as the Laodicean state." That's what I said at the beginning, if you remember. And here is another quote from the same paper one week later on ***August 26, 1890***, and here she writes, "Since the time of the Minneapolis meeting, I have seen the state of the Laodicean Church as never before."

The Minneapolis meeting, you'll remember, was when many of the church leaders were rejecting the righteousness by faith message presented by elders Waggoner and Jones. And finally in 1898 she wrote in ***Notebook Leaflets, page 99*** that, "The church (**the SDA church**) is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst." That means

that the church wasn't in the procession when this was written. At this point in the history of the church, God was still working and giving the church, which was in the Laodicean state, an opportunity to come back to Christ if they would, but as time has gone on, has that happened? I'll let you be the judge of that, because remember, it's an individual matter.

Now this next statement I'm going to share with you is not a statement that gives me pleasure to read, but it's a true statement nonetheless. It's a future prediction that was made in 1893, just five years before the one I just read, and once again, I'll let each one of you determine for yourselves whether or not the time mentioned has been reached.

Review & Herald, August 1, 1893, "Of those who boast of their light, and yet fail to walk in it, Christ says, 'But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum [Seventh-day Adventist, who have had great light], which art exalted unto heaven [in point of privilege], shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.' . . . 'And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I give to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.'"

Shiloh, you'll remember, was the place of worship before God's people worshiped in Jerusalem. It was destroyed and the Ark taken because of the sins of Eli's sons, or because of the leaders of the church at Shiloh. And when you consider that Sister White equated the fate of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with Shiloh, what is she saying? She's saying that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would be cast out of God's sight as well, and for the same reason. The Ark was taken by the Philistines because the law inside of it wasn't being kept. They had the law, and they professed to keep it, and that they were God's church because of it, but they soon found out that a profession without corresponding works cannot save anyone. And so the analogy given by the prophet is that the law isn't being kept by the people that are supposed to be in the procession in these last days in order to tell the other churches that they must leave their apostate churches and keep it or be lost, and as a result of their failure, they would be brought down to hell along with all the other churches that were in the Laodicean state, or those represented as the foolish virgin churches.

Now, we're about half way through, so let's do a little review. When the wise and the foolish virgins heard the message of the midnight cry, it produced a crisis in all the churches of the world, and just as the message to "behold Christ" and "go ye out to meet Him" was what caused the crisis in the churches back in 1844, so it is the same message that causes a crisis to develop in all the churches once again in these last days.

As we've already seen, when is it time to fix our eyes on Christ and obey the message? It's now friends! It's time when you hear the message, have opportunity to study it to make sure it's true, and then act upon it by joining the procession, because that's where the Bridegroom and the true church who love God and keep His commandments is. This is essentially the same message of the third and fourth angels' messages combined, which is called the loud cry rather than the midnight cry, but we don't have time to develop that any further right now.

And when all the wise leave that are going to leave, then all that are left in all the churches are foolish virgin Laodiceans. This is in the process of happening today. By and large, this experience takes place within nominal Adventism first and then within the rest of the fallen churches in the world. And the only ones who are going to give the message to the rest of the world are the wise virgins who have joined the procession. We know this is true because the door is shut for Adventists before it shuts for the rest of the world.

1 Peter 4:17 tells us that judgment begins where? At the house of God, or God's professed church in the last days, and the Spirit of Prophecy confirms this in *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 9, page 97*, the context being the last message of mercy which is given to the world, and it says, "There are many who have not yet heard the testing truth for this time. There are many with whom the Spirit of God is striving. The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter."

Oh friends, we are living in momentous times, because this parable is in the process of being fulfilled right now, and we're all going to act a part as either wise or foolish virgins, and the way we respond to the message brought out in this object lesson will determine which it will be.

Now, let's suppose that we are all among the wise virgins who join the procession, I hope we are. But does that mean then that we are sealed for heaven because we left a foolish

virgin Laodicean church? No! It was just another step on the pathway to eternal life. In the very first vision Ellen White was given, God showed her this pathway and also the people who were on it, along with some of the dangers and events that would take place while they were on this pathway. She also tells us where the pathway ended and the goal of those walking on it. This vision, the first one she had at the tender age of 17, is recorded in *Early Writings, pages 11-20*, but we're only going to read *pages 14 and 15*, but I encourage you to read the whole thing.

In *Early Writings, pages 14-15*, she writes, "While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world. I turned to look for the Advent people in the world, but could not find them, when a voice said to me, 'Look again, and look a little higher.' At this I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry. **(And so, this brings it into the context of the ten-virgin parable, doesn't it?)** This light **(the midnight cry)** shone all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe."

So, every single person who was on this path had to have previously obeyed the midnight cry. That's what placed their feet upon the pathway to the city of God, and as long as they didn't reject that message, they were safe. And those who didn't join the procession when the call first went forth to meet the Bridegroom, were not with the wise on the path that led to the city of God.

And so, we have to ask ourselves the question: where are we as individuals in the experience of this parable? Jesus gave us this parable to show us where we are in relation to our goal of eternal life. So if our hearts are still in Laodicea with the foolish virgins and we hear the midnight cry, we better join the procession without delay, or we'll end up like Lot's wife.

Now, even though the wise virgins left their corrupt churches and joined the procession before they started their ascent up this path, they still had to continue to progress, didn't they? They had to keep their eyes fixed on Christ who was just before them and walk in the light of the midnight cry that their feet might not stumble. Also, that means that they had to gain victory over sin all along the pathway, because that's what Christ's church does! They don't follow the foolish virgin churches that teach salvation in sin, because Christ is not in a church like that. However, at no point along this path could they say,

“We made it!” They had to continue on step by step and follow the light if they wanted to make it to the Holy City that was just before them.

So, if it was Christ who was just before all the people leading them to the city, then it was also Christ who was requiring all of God’s people to go through the pain of separating from a church and a people they loved in order to be with Him. And didn’t Jesus have to go through this same experience when He was here? He did, and He doesn’t ask us to do anything He Himself has not done.

In ***The Desire of Ages, page 232*** it says, “The Sanhedrin had rejected Christ’s message and was bent upon His death; therefore Jesus departed from Jerusalem, from the priests, the temple, the religious leaders, the people who had been instructed in the law, and turned to another class to proclaim His message, and to gather out those who should carry the gospel to all nations.”

You see, these gathered out ones are the kind of people who are in the procession. All through history the principles in this parable have been repeated in the lives of all who were determined to follow their Saviour at any cost. The New Testament church joined the procession when they left the Jewish church, Protestants joined when they left Catholicism, Adventists joined when the Protestant churches quit protesting and became apostate Protestantism, and we join when we see that the church we belong to has become corrupt like all the others before it.

And remember, profession means nothing unless the law of God is actually being kept, because that’s what the great controversy is all about. In ***The Great Controversy, page 582*** it says, “From the very beginning of the great controversy in heaven it has been Satan’s purpose to overthrow the law of God. It was to accomplish this that he entered upon his rebellion against the Creator, and though he was cast out of heaven he has continued the same warfare upon the earth. To deceive men, and thus lead them to transgress God’s law, is the object which he has steadfastly pursued.”

So we shouldn’t think that Satan’s object has changed, and we shouldn’t be surprised that he has had so much success in doing this within the very church that makes a law keeping profession in these last days. This is what the great controversy is all about, and it’s what the alpha/omega apostasy, that began within the Seventh-day Adventist church with Doctor Kellogg, is all about. That God lives in the sinner when He doesn’t. That was the pantheistic theory that Sister White warned was coming and would develop into the omega apostasy, and it’s here friends, and it has been for quite some time.

The *Desire of Ages*, page 232 continues by saying, “As the light and life of men was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation. Again and again the history of Christ's withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth. In our day few of the professed followers of the Reformers are actuated by their spirit. Few are listening for the voice of God, and ready to accept truth in whatever guise it may be presented. Often those who follow in the steps of the Reformers are forced to turn away from the churches they love, in order to declare the plain teaching of the word of God. And many times those who are seeking for light are by the same teaching obliged to leave the church of their fathers, that they may render obedience.”

Now here’s an important principle we need to keep in mind as we consider this parable and all the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy statements we’ve read so far this morning. And it’s this, it’s a true message that calls people out, and it’s a false message that keeps people in. If you don’t remember anything else, remember this, it’s a true message that calls people out of a church in apostasy, and it’s a false message that urges people to stay and try to work from within.

According to *Early Writings*, which we will read more from in a minute, some who started out on the path to the Holy City as wise virgins, ended up acting very foolish? They began to grow weary of the good fight of faith. Maybe they got tired of meeting in small groups or in people’s homes. Maybe they began to miss the friends they left behind. Perhaps they became discouraged with the length and narrowness of the path and wondered why they weren’t in heaven yet, or maybe they began to think they had made a terrible mistake by joining the procession, because listen very carefully friends, all of the wise virgins did not make it to the end of the path as we’ll find out as we continue reading from *Early Writings, pages 14-15* where it says, “If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. **(And remember now, this is in the context of the ten-virgin parable and the midnight cry)** But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising His glorious right arm **(that’s important)**, and from His arm came a light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted, ‘Alleluia!’

Now, because this parable applies to us today, and this vision illustrates what Jesus taught in this parable, that means we should also praise the Lord for this light, because it's going to help us finish our journey. But what was this light? It says Jesus raised His glorious right arm. What is the right arm of the third angel's message? It's health reform. When the health message came they said Alleluia! But I'm sure there were some who said, "Oh no, you mean we have to give up our meat and dairy, and eggs and become a vegan? You mean we have to start dressing more modestly than the rest of the world? You mean we have to start following the eight laws of health?" And when you read the testimonies you'll find many examples of this kind of response to the health message during the time the light of the midnight cry was guiding their feet up the pathway. And as it was then, so it is today. Some were already weary and about ready to fall off the path, and one more requirement was about to push them over the brink. In fact, that's what happened to some of them.

Anciently when God led the children of Israel to separate from Egypt and into the wilderness, they had to depend on Him for food and water and total sustenance, but what did they begin to do? When God provided manna, were they thankful at first? Yes! Most said, "Praise God, we're not going to starve, we're going to have the strength to continue our journey to the Promised Land." But it didn't take very long before they began to murmur and complain and want to go back to the flesh pots of Egypt, did it? Suddenly they didn't appreciate the manna anymore and said, "This diet is too restrictive." And they wanted to go back to the churches they left so they could indulge in their cheese laden potlucks where the diet was much more to their liking.

Early Writings continues, "Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had let them out so far. **(And guess what? It says)** The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus, and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below."

So here we have a condition where individuals had separated from their apostate churches and had gotten on the path, but eventually reached a point where they said, "It was not God who led us out!" And they became like the foolish virgins in their thinking and went back to join them. Is this not exactly what we have seen take place in Adventism over the past 30 years or so?

We need to understand brothers and sisters, that when the door was shut, yes, it was shut to the foolish who hadn't made preparation to join the procession, but that does not mean that the wise who joined could not open that door from the inside and leave

any time they wanted, and that's exactly what happened to some of the wise who fell off the path. God does not use force, that's Satan's way of doing things. We are free at any time to backslide if we so choose.

In ***The Great Controversy, page 428*** it says, "In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure of the marriage is introduced", that is, the same figure as in the ten-virgin parable, and what happened to those guests that didn't have on the wedding garment that represented the righteous character of Christ? They were cast out!

So here we have the experience of some of the wise virgins that followed the Lord out of the churches, but at some point they said, "You know, I really don't think it was God that wanted us to separate from our church. Since we left we've had nothing but trials and suffering. We've had to separate from friends, from family members, we've had to meet all kinds of fanatical ideas and extremes of every kind, and false doctrines without number," and they began to doubt that the midnight cry was God's plan for them to reach the Holy City. And it says, "the light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness and they stumbled, lost sight of the mark and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below."

They either went back to their apostate Laodicean churches, or they left religion altogether and went to living worldly lives. And this experience is exactly what happened in history. It's estimated that fifty thousand people obeyed the midnight cry in the summer of 1844, which separated from their apostate churches, but after they started on the path, the great disappointment occurred and Jesus didn't come like they expected, and how many people remained true to the message? There were only about 50 out of 50,000 who remained true to the message. That's only one tenth of one percent who remained on the path. 49,950 people who chose to follow the Lord at the beginning, ended up leaving the path to the Holy City. What does that tell you about now, as history is being repeated? It's a solemn thought. And what happened to the people who denied that it was the Lord that wanted them to choose this separated pathway? Their probation closed when they fell off the path down into the dark wicked world below and they could never climb up the side of the mountain again and get back on the path. So first we have probation closing for the foolish virgins who weren't able to join the procession, and a little later we have probation closing for those who did join the procession and made it to the path, but then fell off when they decided it wasn't God who was leading them.

A Word to the Little Flock, page 14 says, "It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected." And

so, they could not get back on the path again once they decidedly rejected the message? This tells us that it is possible to fall on the path, and after the forgiving grace of God, to get up and continue the journey, but if we fall off the path by rejecting the message brought home to our minds by the Holy Spirit, there's no getting back on.

Do you see how important it is, that before you separate from an apostate church that you study for yourself, that you trim your lamp and know for yourself that the message is true, and that it's God who is wanting you to do so before you do it? Because if you get up on this path and afterward come to find out it was just excitement, or fear and paranoia that caused you to separate, you will begin to doubt that it was God who called you out, just like many have done, and you will fall off the path and be lost. Especially will this be true when a death decree goes forth and you haven't allowed the Holy Spirit to help you develop the kind of character that's represented by the oil.

Now, I want to bring out one more point before we close. What was the first separation that occurred in this parable? It was when the wise left and the foolish stayed. The good separated from the bad. But what was the second separation over on the path? It was just the opposite; it was the bad separating from the good. The good remained on the path and the bad left. Don't let the devil deceive you into thinking that the first separation is the bad that leaves the church and the good that remain, because if you believe that heresy, you will end up remaining in a corrupt church that will be brought down to hell. It's not all the good that stick with an apostate church hoping it will turn around. God is calling His people out so they won't be corrupted by the great apostasy that will continue to get worse and worse until the Lord comes. Let me read it to you.

Special Testimonies for the Church, Series B, Number 2, page 56, This is titled, "Standing in the Way of God's Messages" written from Sanitarium, CA, Dec. 4, 1905.

"One thing it is certain is soon to be realized,—the great apostasy **(and this is in the context of the alpha/omega apostasy that began with Doctor Kellogg's pantheistic theories that God lives in the sinner)**, "One thing it is certain is soon to be realized,—the great apostasy **(within Adventism)**, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout."

In the ***Review and Herald, March 22, 1887*** it tells us why this great apostasy will increase and get worse until the Lord comes. The prophet writes, "The old standard-bearers knew what it was to wrestle with God in prayer, and to enjoy the outpouring of his Spirit. But these are passing off from the stage of action; and who are coming up to fill their places?"

How is it with the rising generation? are they converted to God? Are we awake to the work that is going on in the heavenly Sanctuary, or are we waiting for some compelling power to come upon the church before we shall arouse? Are we hoping to see the whole church revived? That time will never come.” Why? Because the apostasy only gets worse as time goes on. So don’t think that it’s going to get better; don’t try to work from within, but instead, set an example by joining the procession that is headed for the Holy City.

The reason the probation of the individuals who grew weary and doubted and fell off the path closed, was because it was the Holy Spirit that enlightened their minds with the message of the midnight cry and gave them the courage to leave their churches to be with Christ. And then they got out there on this path and began to doubt that it was really God who led them out. So, in effect they were saying, “it wasn’t the Holy Spirit who led me to separate, it wasn’t light and truth, but darkness from the devil.” So, what sin did they commit? The unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost.

So please, when the midnight cry comes to you and causes you to fix your eyes on Christ, and you study the message of separation from apostate churches and see that it’s true by building upon the sure foundation of scripture, and not leave the church because your friends are leaving it, or because it sounds right, or because you’re disgruntled for some reason, but because you know it’s right. Then your foundation is on Christ and not on man, or any group of men. Only then will you be able to stand through all the doubts, and insinuations, and persecution, and false accusations, and trials, and suffering, and oppression that the devil will throw at you to try to knock you off the path. By the way, this is not the subject today, but these trials are the things that will help us develop that righteous character if we go to God for help, if we stay on the path and allow the light of the mid-night cry to light the way. The devil’s plan is to destroy you with these trials, but God will use them to prepare a people for heaven and the earth made new.

Now, we’re almost done, but we need to understand that the path continues on to a point at which it stops. In other words, there’s no pathway that we can walk after a certain point to get to heaven. Do you know what represents the ending of this pathway? All along this path we had a mediator, our High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, but when Jesus says, “It is finished,” and steps out of the Most Holy Place, there is no more path to walk! There’s no more intercessor to look to for forgiveness! If we haven’t gotten victory over sin by then, we never will. How then do we make it to heaven when the path runs out? It is faith and trust in the Lord, built into our characters to such an extent, that we would rather die than knowingly commit a wrong act. That we would

rather die than turn our backs on the midnight cry and go back to what we left. That we're so settled into the truth so we cannot be moved.

Remember the dream Ellen White had titled "Traveling The Narrow Way"? It's in the book *Life Sketches*. As she and James were traveling the narrow pathway, **pages 192, 193** says, "At length we came to a large chasm, at which our path ended. There was nothing now to guide the feet, nothing upon which to rest them **(It's because dear friends, Jesus' mediatorial work had ended and they had to hang on to the cord of faith and swing across the chasm)**. . . The sweat was dropping from my face, and I felt such anguish as I had never felt before. A fearful struggle was before us. Should we fail here, all the difficulties of our journey had been experienced for naught.

"Before us, on the other side of the chasm, was a beautiful field of green grass, about six inches high. I could not see the sun, but bright, soft beams of light, resembling fine gold and silver, were resting upon this field. Nothing I had seen upon earth could compare in beauty and glory with this field. **(This of course represented heaven and the Holy City)** But could we succeed in reaching it? was the anxious inquiry. Should the cord break, we must perish. **(In another dream she had she says the "cord represented faith to my mind and the beauty and simplicity of trusting in God." Early Writings, page 81)**

"Again, in whispered anguish, the words were breathed, 'What holds the cord?' For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed: 'Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now.' Still we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken: 'God holds the cord. We need not fear.' These words were repeated by those behind us, accompanied with: 'He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far in safety.'

"My husband then swung himself over the fearful abyss into the beautiful field beyond. I immediately followed. And oh, what a sense of relief and gratitude to God we felt! I heard voices raised in triumphant praise to God. I was happy, perfectly happy."

Friends, God requires His people today to go through this experience in order that they might inherit eternal life. That's why Jesus began this parable by saying, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

So, this is the question that comes to each one of us today: who or what do I love supremely? Is it the denominational church corporation? Is it myself? Is it some other human being? Or is it Jesus? Jesus sweat blood for you in the Garden of Gethsemane, and decided to sacrifice His life on the old rugged cross that you might have the chance to make it to the wedding supper before the door is shut, and remain there till Christ's

ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is complete. Are you willing to follow Him wherever He goes, and do whatever He says, regardless of what anyone else does or does not do? Even if every earthly support is cut off? Are you going to be a wise virgin, and remain one, till you swing across the abyss by following the directions Jesus gave us in this parable? This is the testing message that all of us must respond to, and remain faithful to, in order to keep from falling off the path and making it to the Holy City.

In ***Review & Herald, February 11, 1896*** the prophet writes, “My mind was carried to the future, when the signal will be given. ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’ But some will have delayed to obtain the oil for replenishing their lamps, and too late they will find that character, which is represented by the oil, is not transferable.”

May this not be our experience, but rather that we will be found to be wise virgins who have developed the kind of character Jesus can take back to heaven with Him when He comes. That we will be enabled, by the power of the Holy Spirit to stay on the pathway with the faithful few and experience the joys that await them at the end of the journey. Don't miss it friends! Don't let anyone keep you from accepting the present truth this parable teaches. Because if you miss heaven, you will have missed the reason you were born. To say nothing about disappointing of the One who made it all possible.