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# Parables: Preparation

By Bryan Hodge

"There's a great day coming, a great day coming, a great day coming by and by; when the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left, are you ready for that day to come?" Will Thompson

Let us consider three parables that we will classify as "preparation" parables.

## **The Shrewd Steward (Luke 16:1-13)**

The Setting (Luke 16:1): Jesus spoke this parable before his disciples. It is one in a series of parables which some see as related - (1) The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32), though not the primary point, some waste what has been given unto them; (2) The shrewd steward (Luke 16:1-13), there is an admonition to be wise in managing what has been entrusted; (3) The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), one has misused what he had in life.

The Parable (Luke 16:1-13): A certain steward was about to be audited. If he lost his position, what would he do? He was, by self-assessment, physically not able to do hard labor, such as digging. He did not want to beg.

He quickly went into action to settle outstanding accounts receivable. He discounted the amount owed. He thought perhaps the debtors would so appreciate this, that they will help him if he should lose his job.

He is called an "unjust steward" (NKJV) or "unrighteous steward" (NASB) in verse 8. This may or may not mean what most think. Most think that he was called this because he had no authority to so discount the debts. However, there is another possibility. The literal reading can be rendered, "steward of unrighteousness," which may correspond with "unrighteous mammon" (v. 9, 11). It may simply refer to the fact that this man was a steward of the material, rather than the spiritual.

The master commended this man (v. 8). He was not commended for any dishonesty for which he may or may not have been guilty. He is commended for having dealt shrewdly (NKJV), or wisely (KJV).

The application (Luke 16:8): A wise man is concerned about his physical future. He thinks of and plans for it. How much more thought and preparation should one make concerning his spiritual future.

## **The Marriage of the King's Son (Matthew 22:2-14)**

The setting: Jesus is in Jerusalem (Matthew 21:23-ff). It is the week leading to the cross.

The parable (Matthew 22:2-14): A king has planned a grand wedding for his son. He sent out invitations, but the invitations were rejected. Think of the disappointment. Weddings are costly (the average wedding in the

U.S. costs over \$26,000). This was no average wedding. It was a royal wedding. Moreover, this was to honor his son and daughter-in-law!

The day of the wedding came and he sent messengers out with a second invitation. He said, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding. Some made light of it and ignored the invitation. Some went farther, mistreating and even killing the king's messengers.

The king sent out more messengers. He dropped the invitation list, telling his messengers to find anyone that could come to the wedding.

The guests arrived. However, one guest was not properly clothed. Eldred Echols commented, "Some scholars have understood this refers to the craftan or white robe, which in some mid-eastern cultures was supplied by the host and given to each guest at the door by the attendant" [(Discovering the Pearl of Great Price, p. 171) whether this is in view or not - I do not know]. This guest was cast out.

The application: The Gospel invitation has been sent out. Many reject it. Some show up but are improperly clothed (Revelation 3:4; 3:5; 7:13-14). "Many are called but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

### **The Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)**

The setting: Jesus is in Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1; 24:3). It is the week leading to the cross. Jesus is teaching that man needs to live ever ready for His return. He says, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only... Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour the Lord is coming... be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect... Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13).

The Parable (Matthew 25:1-13): The parable concerns a wedding. The custom of the day is helpful to understand. The groom went to the bride's father's house (McGarvey, Matthew and Mark, p. 215). Festivities and entertainment occurred. The bride and her bride-maids (the virgins) went to the groom's house, without the groom, to wait for him. A messenger announced the coming of the groom. The bride-maids went out to meet him and escort him to the house. This was usually at night. It was at the groom's house the marriage ceremony took place (Wayne Jackson, The Parables in Profile, p. 81).

All ten virgins had made some preparation. They were all present. They all had their lamps. They all had trimmed their lamps.

However, five did not bring extra oil for their lamps. They were not prepared for the grooms delay. In panic these five left to get oil. When they returned they found themselves shut out of the wedding.

The application (Matthew 24:13): "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the son of man is coming."