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WILLIAMSVILLE STUDY WEEKEND - August 1994

CHRIST IN YOU - THE HOPE OF GLORY

Speaker: Bro. John Ullman

Study #2

The Books To Be Opened

Reading: Matthew 25:1-13

Again brethren and sisters, we come to consider words in this our second study, which are very, very relevant to our present generation, in our preparation for the Lord's coming, that we might have Christ in us, and that might be our hope of glory. The words we take are found in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 12, and are some of the most dramatic words in the Apocalypse, and this is what they say, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works'. Now, that is the dramatic picture that is painted in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 12, concerning the time when the saints will be gathered before the Son of God, for judgment.

Psalm 50 puts it in these words, 'He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people. Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' Now, it is at that time that the books will be opened, to reveal whether or not, those whose names are recorded therein, will be received as the Bride of Christ, or whether they will not. The word 'books' in the plural, refers to a day book or a series of day books, as they are used in business, to record the day by day transactions of trading. They're sometimes used as ledgers, and in some parts of the world they're called that, like a set of daily trading figures. You may recall that Malachi refers to a 'book of remembrance', a book of remembrance which contains a record of the day by day incidents, in the lives of God's saints. But the summarized conclusions which are evident from those finer details, are then to be transferred into a final ledger, which is referred to in the book of Revelation as THE book of THE life, in Revelation chapter 20 and at verse 12, as we have referred to at the beginning of this study. It is referred to in the literal Greek as 'THE book of THE life' and in that particular book, only the names of those recorded in this book, will receive the life that is promised to the redeemed; the endless life of divine nature. In other words, they will be the ones, who will have lived by the theme, CHRIST IN ME, THE HOPE OF GLORY. Now, of course, there is no need for literal books to be kept in regard to these

matters; sometimes we read these references to the book of life, the books of life, or the book of the life, and we imagine literal ledgers being compiled in heaven recording all these things. Those things, of course, are not necessary, in fact as Bro. Thomas tells us in his translation of John chapter 14 and verse 26, 'the Spirit is the 'Remembrancer', that's the way he puts it. The Spirit is the 'Remembrancer'. We know today for example, what some of the great departments in various governments have in the way of computers, and how that these computers are just stacked with countless millions upon millions of items of knowledge, that can be drawn upon in a matter of a few seconds by pressing a few keys, and these things can be shown on a screen or they can be printed out. They are stored in a computer, but as far as God is concerned, the Spirit being all powerful and all embracing, it is quite possible for God to remember all these things, but nevertheless, the symbology is very, very sobering and very thought provoking. And when we come to consider who are those whose names will be found written in THE book of THE life, a very good place to turn to is that passage which our presiding brother has read for us today in Matthew chapter 25, and that is to give a consideration to the parable of the ten virgins. That is going to occupy us, God willing, in our second study, the parable of the ten virgins, because you see, here in this parable, we have defined for us, those who will have lived by the precept CHRIST IN ME, THE HOPE OF GLORY, and those who have failed to do so, and yet have been blessed with the calling, to have been called to this highest of all callings, to serve God, to serve Christ, to honour them according to the Spirit of the Word, and to WALK WITH THEM in the spirit of the truth. So, let us look again at Matthew chapter 25; let us consider some of the very vital points that are taught to us in this remarkable parable.

In verse 1, it starts with the word 'then'. Now, that's a very interesting word, because it means 'then' in the literal English sense, but it also means, perhaps more definitively, 'at that time', and generally in our English usage of that word, we would use it in a very similar way. We might say for example, 'that we will finish this study, God willing, and then we will have lunch'. What we mean is, that lunch will be at roughly the same period of time as we are having our study, but of course, lunch will follow afterwards, and you better all bear that in mind! You've got to wait for it until it comes! Nevertheless, here we have a word that is very, very significant, and you know, brethren and sisters, the more you study the Word, the more closely you study it, I find particularly, in these little Greek words in the New Testament, you so often find that these little words have a great power of meaning. And they are very, very significant in the passage in which they occur. Now, you're going to see that here in just a moment, but before we do that, let's just bear in mind the fact, that the word 'then' signifies 'then, or 'at that time'. Now, it's a common word in this chapter; you'll find that same word in verse 7, it occurs again in verse 31; you'll find it in verse 34, in verse 37, in verse 41, in verse 44 and then again in verse 45. So it is a common word in Matthew 25; Matthew's got a habit of doing that; he links things together, not necessarily in chronological order, but in the order in which he wishes to present his message. So it's a common word in Matthew 25, but we're interested particularly, in the way in which it occurs at the beginning of chapter 25, 'THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom'. Now it means 'at that time', so in other words, what we ask ourselves, and this provides one of the keys to

understanding the significance of this parable; in relation to the parable we ask, what time is that?

When the chapter starts with that word, 'at that time' shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins. At what time is that? Well, the answer is, the time of the fulfillment of the previous parable. Turn the page back to chapter 24, and we have verses 42 to 51, 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up'. You see, there again is that warning that we considered in our first study. We'll have a look at that perhaps in just a moment. But particularly, notice verse 42, 'Watch therefore', now we might think to ourselves, well, surely we can say that if God is giving us the signs of the times, and we can see those signs and understand them, what do we need to watch for?' Well, again we come back to that which we alluded to in our first study, the very weakness and perversity of human nature. You know, sometimes we have a situation don't we, where a brother is perhaps going astray from the truth, and he's going to fall away, perhaps in a doctrine or a practice, which is quite contrary to the demands of the truth, and we go to him and we say, 'look, come with me to such and such a passage and I'll show you very, very clearly, how you should be handling this situation'. We turn up the scripture, we show him and he says, 'well, that's fine; that's O.K. I don't want to know about it. I'm going to do what I'm going to do'. Human nature is very perverse; there is no good thing in human nature, and that's something else that we always also have to remind ourselves. Remember in John 6 and verse 63, the Lord Jesus Christ said there, 'the flesh profiteth nothing, nothing', and you might wonder why I said it twice, because it doesn't occur twice in John 6, but it does occur twice in the Greek because it is what is known as a double negative. So, a double negative is used there for emphasis, so the Lord says, 'the flesh profiteth nothing, nothing'. Don't look for the flesh to produce any good thing that is of any value to God. This nature is not a godly nature; nor does this nature produce godly thoughts or godly things. The only thing of a godly nature that is ever going to happen to us, and will happen to us, is when the Word of God enters into our intellects, and becomes the driving force or the motivating force in our lives. It is the Word of God from without that enters into our mind, illuminates our mind with the Word of truth, shows us the commandments of God and the way in which we should walk, as we saw in our first study, and it is that only that will produce godliness in our lives. So therefore, we have this parable, and notice particularly, verse 42 and 43, we've still got to watch. We've had the signs of the times, but you know, brethren and sisters, it's evident that the Lord wouldn't be saying this in verse 42 of Matthew 24, unless there was a danger that at the time of His coming, under the sixth vial, there are going to be many brethren and sisters, who may be well aware of the signs of the times, in a literal sense, 'oh, look what happened in China last week; isn't that an interesting sign. Look what happened in Russia; look what's happening there today, and look at the way Britain is building up this or that, or look at her relationship with such and such. Look what's happening in Israel; isn't it interesting', and to be talking about all those things but still not be watching. In other words, being theoretical Christadelphians and not deeply ingrained in our hearts, with the CHRIST IN YOU principle, and there it is really.

So, in verse 42 and verse 43, 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come'. Now look at verse 43, 'But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up'. Now you may possibly do what I did on one occasion many years ago. I was studying this chapter and I read that verse, and I couldn't get the point, and I read it again, and I read it again, and I read it again, and I must have read it six or eight times. And you see, the point of verse 43 is, that what the Lord says there is so obviously true. 'If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up', now the point is, why bother to state what is so obviously true? Well, finally I discovered or it came to me, that there is a simple and dynamic reason for that in verse 43 and it's this; that the obvious passes unnoticed unless we are alert. And how often does that happen even in the day to day affairs of life? Some of you might work in an office and at one time I had an office and the girl that was my secretary would sometimes come into me and say, 'Mr. Ullman you received an urgent call from Mr. Brown in Sidney and he wants you to call him back. He might be a very important person', and I'm busy doing something. I say 'yes, ok fine! Thanks very much, I'll fix that up', and I go on doing what I'm doing and it goes out of my head, and I forget about it altogether. Now, nothing can be more obvious than such a message from the secretary to her boss to tell him that this is something urgent that needs to be attended to, and you think to yourself, 'I'll just fix this up and then I'll get on to it in a while'. And an hour later, she'll come back and she'll say, 'Did you answer that call to Mr. Brown?' Oh, Mr. Brown! No, get him fast, get him quick!, and you have to get on and do it. But you see, verse 43 is a powerful verse. I've heard brethren say, 'Well, why on earth does the Lord put that there when it is so obvious?' But, that is the point of it, brethren and sisters, the obvious will pass unnoticed unless we are alert, and that is what the Lord is trying to get us to see when He says, 'Watch therefore'.

Now, you know exactly what it means in interpretation. Just imagine for example, that you are about to leave home one evening with your family, and it's around about 7 in the evening, and you're going off to visit a brother and sister, perhaps on the other side of town, and your just about to leave home and you suddenly get a phone call, so you pick up the phone and it's a mysterious voice on the other end that you don't recognize, because you don't know the person, and you get an anonymous tip, and this voice on the other end just says in a quiet voice, 'this is just to let you know, that your house is going to be burgled at 9:30 p.m. tonight'. Clunk! and the phone goes down. What do you do? Do you say, 'well, ok, I'm going off to visit this brother and sister, and I don't think anything will happen'. Would you do that? I know what I'd do; I'd ring up every brother and sister within about ten miles and say, 'come over to our place, we're going to have a gathering here tonight'. I'd put on all the lights and probably get someone to start playing the organ or the piano or whatever. And I'd have the lights on and I'd have the hose going and the sprinklers on, and everything else as well, to make sure that when any robber came anywhere near my place, he'd say, 'too many people there tonight; I can't get near that place', and he'd go away. Isn't that what you'd do? Isn't that what the Lord is saying here, that 'if the goodman of the house had known at what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and not suffered his house to be

broken up; of course that's what you'd do, and that's the point of what the Lord is saying, BE ALERT, BE READY, BE ON GUARD, and be WATCHING!

Now, look at verse 50 of this chapter as well, 'the lord of that servant' (and remember this is a servant that has not been doing what his lord required of him. He's been playing up; he's been working on the assumption that it will be sometime yet before he needs to worry about the lord returning. He's knows he's going to return, there's no question about that, but he thinks, 'Oh, well, there's time yet, I can get a few things done around here that I want to do, according to my way of doing it.')

So in verse 50, the Lord says, 'that the lord of that servant shall come in a day when He looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of'. Now, do you know what verse 50 is speaking about? It is a verse that reflects a period in the life of that servant, of lost opportunities. That's what it's about, because you see, from the time the master left in that parable, until he came back, that servant had the responsibility to be about his master's work, doing what his master wanted, according to the rules of conduct and belief, laid down by that master. To be running his household and supervising those things exactly as if the master were there present. He knows all that, but he disregards it, so what does it represent? It represents a day or period of lost opportunities, and the verse is the very epitome, brethren and sisters, of procrastination. And we all know what procrastination is, don't we? Procrastination is just 'putting things off', and saying , 'yes, well I know that has got to be attended to, but, I'm busy doing this, I'll get to it later'. Like a phone call for the important Mr. Brown in Sydney. You say you'll get round to it, but it just so happens that you don't do it. You forget all about it; you put it on one side, so here we have a verse in verse 50, and it is the very epitome of lost opportunities and also procrastination. It is a very tragic verse which describes the spiritual condition of many at the Lord's return, because it depicts those who have taken for granted their privileged position in the household of God, and yet they have abused the trust, that God has delivered into their hands, that they might guard and faithfully honour and fulfill all their commitments that He left with them. And so the Lord Jesus Christ does say that, when He says, 'that he's like a lord who goes to a far country to receive the kingdom for himself, and to return'. So therefore, in view of the fact that they are losing their opportunities, so busily engaged are they in other things, and they are procrastinating in putting off the things that the Master wants them to do while he is away, they find that they are not ready for the coming of the Lord; they have not prepared themselves and they have not been faithful to their calling. And so, they have lost sight of the principle, CHRIST IN THEM, THE HOPE OF GLORY. Maybe they're still talking to each other about the hope of glory, and maybe they're thinking, 'well, you know, the Lord's going to come sooner or later; we don't know quite when; we've lost sight of the signs of the times, and so forth. But He'll come and He'll come back, and won't it be wonderful!. But in the meantime, we'll amuse ourselves and get all the things that we want to get done before He comes, and we'll attend to His business and His affairs, later'. We'll make sure that we get everything done before He comes'. But what happens? There's a knock at the door, bang! the Master is come. So you see, now we understand the significance of the word 'then', at the beginning of chapter 25. In other words, 'AT THAT TIME', at that epoch of history when the Lord is about to appear and when the saints are to be called together for judgment, and when the Lord will administer that

judgment upon His household at His coming. In other words, where we started in this second study, and that is, the time when the books will be opened, and the record will be made known.

So, the Lord says in Matthew 25 and verse 1, 'Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins', and first of all, we'll look at those opening words, 'then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened and the word means 'likened' in the sense of 'resemble'. So the subject is 'the kingdom', so therefore, we have the situation within the ecclesial world at that time, and it will 'resemble' this parable, and that is exactly what the Lord is saying here. So, again, we need to be warned by this, don't we? because those opening words make that very, very clear, 'then shall the kingdom of heaven resemble ten virgins which took their lamps'. So in the parable, there are ten virgins. Why ten? Well, ten is the biblical number to represent 'fullness', so in other words, the ecclesia throughout the ages is represented here. The ecclesia throughout the ages who are to be gathered together before the Lord for judgment, when the books are opened. But, also in the sense of completion it means, when the very last one whom God is going to call into the way of the truth, has been called. And it will be very much like the 'days of Noah' when Noah and his family entered into the ark, and remember, when Noah and his family entered into the ark, the scriptures specifically states that it was God who shut the door. It was not Noah, when Noah got all the family inside and said, 'Alright, now is everybody present here; count heads. Yes, we're all here, right, I'll just shut the door and lock it from the inside, and everything will be fine'. IT DIDN'T HAPPEN THAT WAY! Noah and his family went into the ark, and GOD SHUT THE DOOR. In other words, it is very significant that it should have been so. What it actually means is, that in shutting Noah and his family in to the ark God effectively shut the rest of the world out. In other words, the time had come, and Noah we believe, had preached to try and bring salvation to some, for a period of 120 years, but the forbearance of God does run its course, and there'll come a time when the very last one, or ones, that God intends to call into the truth, wherever it might be, in whatever part of the world it might be, the time will come and it will be like God shutting Noah's door in the ark. And the time will come, so then, the time will be for 'the gathering together of the saints'. So that is why we have 10 virgins; the complete number of those who are to be called, we don't know what that number is, we are not JW's and saying there are 144,000 or 200,000 or whatever; we know there will be probably many, many, many men; a vast multitude, but the time will come, when the end will come, and that will be it then.

So we know that 5 are wise, and we also know that 5 are foolish. And yet, despite that, all ten are called virgins. That seems strange doesn't it? Why doesn't the Lord tell a parable and say, 'behold the kingdom of God shall resemble 5 wise virgins and 5 fools'; but He doesn't do that. He calls them 10 virgins. Why does He do that? Well, the reason is because the 5 that are adjudged as foolish, will not have left the ecclesia and returned to the world. They will not have repudiated their Christadelphian beliefs. In all probability, they still will be regular attenders at the meetings. And of course, anyone who is called to the truth, is called to be a virgin in the sense of separation from the apostate churches of the world. Revelation 14 and verses 1 to 4 makes that clear when it says that the Lord Jesus Christ will appear on Mt. Zion in His glory, and there

we have the symbolic number that is given there, and we are told there they are virgins. And what it means is, of course, they are virgins in the sense of the terminology used in the Apocalypse where we have the mother of harlots. So they are virgins, in that they are not harlots. They are not related to 'the mother of harlots', insofar as their doctrinal beliefs and their religious practices are concerned. So you see, they have been deemed by the Lord to be 'foolish' because of one grave flaw in their attitude toward the truth. They will have lost sight of the fact that there must be CHRIST IN THEM, that is going to bring them THE HOPE OF GLORY. They may be still talking very, very avidly to one another about THE HOPE OF GLORY, but the development of the Christ like character within them, has waned and they're busy with other things, as the previous parable shows. And you see, there's a clear link there.

The previous parable shows why some of these virgins are foolish, why they're not wise. We may say that in the words of Revelation 2 and verse 4, their problem is that they have left their 'first love'. And after all, what is the 'first love'? The first love is defined in Matthew chapter 22, when the lawyer came unto the Lord and said, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the Law? And the word means 'the first and foremost and the very greatest'. A very emphatic word; which is the greatest the most fundamental, the most important, the most compelling commandment in the Law, and the Lord didn't quote him one of the ten commandments. He quoted him from Deuteronomy 6 and verse 5, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the 'first and greatest of commandments'. Now, you see, when we look at that in Matthew 22 and verse 37 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind', it really doesn't leave anything left for self, does it? if it all must go to God, after the symbology of the burnt offering under the Law of Moses. There's the symbol, the burnt offering, everything offered to God, under the symbology of that, if it's all got to go to God, and that word 'all' incidentally, is a very powerful little word in the Greek as well. It does mean 'all', it means 'the whole', everything. It means that God has got to be first, second, third, fourth, fifth in our lives, and anything that we do of our own selves has got to be according to that basis and according to that principle, 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God'.

In Deuteronomy 6 and verse 5 it is 'Yahweh thy Elohim, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and withommandment', and that word 'all' is that very important word that we just tried to stress, it means the whole. There's no getting around that in any sense whatever, as with the whole burnt offering. There's nothing left after this offering has been made; absolutely nothing at all. Everything has been given to God, so that the second commandment which occurs in verse 39, can only come out of and be the result of keeping the first. And you know that sometimes, we do hear brethren quote the second commandment, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self, in the sense of practicing 'love', and we don't deny that for one moment, the Lord says it and it's got to be done, there's no question about it, but we cannot afford to take verse 39 and parade that as though it is the first and greatest commandment. The neighbour or even our brethren and sisters, do not take precedence over our loyalty to our Father. But if our loyalty to God is right, and it is on a firm and just foundation, and it is according to the principle that the Lord teaches there, then we will keep the second commandment,

because it is the outworking of the keeping of the first. Because God alone, is worthy of everything that we have to offer, and any other interpretation of those two greatest commandments, is really the result of a fleshly religion, and it's really demeaning to God. We've got to be very careful that we get that in the right order. Now, I'm not in any sense, (I don't want anyone to misinterpret me or misunderstand me here), I'm not demeaning the second commandment. What I'm saying is, don't let's demean the first, and let us remember that the first is the first, and therefore, the second has got to come out of it. And what it really amounts to is this, that to make sympathy for flesh, the first and greatest commandment is to betray the God whom we claim to serve. So we have first to honour the commandments of God; we have first to uphold the righteousness of God as the Lord teaches us in Matthew 18, and then everything else will come out of that, and upon that basis, everything else we do will have a basis in wisdom and a basis in correct decisions, even though none of us are going to be right all the time, are we?

And so, we have here in Matthew 25, in this parable, we have 5 foolish virgins. And in their lives in the truth, they've lost sight of what the truth is really all about. So, they're in a great deal of trouble, and the Lord, of course, before the time of the antitypical 'shutting of the Noahaic door' would have done everything possible to try and get these 'foolish virgins' to become 'wise', to draw them back to the principle, CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY. And before we come to the 'hope of glory' we must have CHRIST IN US. So you see, here we've got the 5 unwise virgins, and now Christ is going to return, according to the parable, that He might preside over a marriage celebration; His own marriage, to receive to Himself, His faithful bride.

Now what better symbology could there be to represent this coming union, than marriage? What better symbol could the Lord take in Matthew 25 than that? Because true marriage between a man and a woman, is the most warm, the most loving, the most tender, the most enduring of all relationships. That's what marriage is all about. Marriage is not intended to try it for 3 years and then one throws the other out, and tries it with somebody else. That's not what marriage is all about. It is the most wonderful of all human relationships, it is the most warm, the most loving, the most tender, the most enduring, when there is true love, and it's based upon a proper foundation of the principles of divine truth. So in the parable we learn that the foolish virgins will have been quite willing to claim allegiance to the groom, 'oh, yes, we're part of the bride of Christ'; quite happy to be known as His bride, but they will have failed to make themselves 'ready', as it states in Revelation 19 and verse 7, when it's dealing with the bride, and there's another clue to understanding that parable. Because you see, the word that is rendered 'ready' in Revelation 19 and verse 7, is a word which is also translated, quite correctly, as 'prepared'. So, in other words, Revelation 19 and verse 7, which speaks of the coming marriage of the Lamb, is saying that the bride will have made herself 'ready' or it could be understood as, the bride will have 'prepared' herself. And how has she prepared herself? CHRIST IN US. That's it! That's the HOPE OF GLORY. So here we have, this wonderful parable in Matthew 25, and we've seen the background of it, and we've seen some of those very important relative features, which help us to understand what the parable is dealing with.

And so the Lord says there were 10 virgins. They took their lamps, they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Now, let's think about those words very, very carefully, because every word is significant and relevant. Ten virgins took their lamps, went forth to meet the Bridegroom, so let us observe narrowly. They all know where they are to meet the Bridegroom. They are all ten of them, willing to meet Him. They all take up their bibles(their lamps) but some are not too clear about the facts, that the books are to be opened and what that is going to mean, that each one must give an account as Paul says in Corinthians.

So verse 2 of Matthew 25 says, 'And 5 of them were wise and 5 were foolish'. Now, we must understand Christ's assessment of them, is based upon one thing, the disposition of those virgins, their overall attitude toward their life in the truth, and their conduct in regard to the oil. Don't forget that! His assessment is there, that's how He starts. He knows that 5 are wise and 5 are foolish, and His assessment is based upon that fact. Their disposition, their general attitude toward Him as their alleged and claimed Bridegroom, and also their conduct in regard to the oil. We know what the oil is, the oil is the light that is combusted in the Word of God and comes forth as a shining light to lighten the intellect. We know that David says in the Psalms 'thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path'. And so that is the key to the exhortation in the parable.

And verse 3 says, 'They that were foolish, took their lamps and took no oil with them'. It's very interestingly worded, you see, all ten of the virgins must go to the place where they will be assembled before their Lord, that the books might be opened. And the five foolish virgins, take their bibles with them, but not the oil, or not sufficient oil. Why? Simply, because they don't have it. No one would knowingly go out, on a trip at night, we don't know, we cannot assess how far it would have been, but obviously if they had to take their lamps, and they also (it is implied) had to take a backup or a spare supply of oil, no one would go out on a journey like that, unless they were thoroughly, well equipped, or shall we say, thought they were thoroughly, well equipped. So, just imagine putting this into a literal context, as if they say to themselves, 'Alright, well we've got a four mile walk through the darkness of night, so, let's see, we must have enough oil for that, and so let's make sure that we have enough oil, or whatever that is'. But you see, with the five foolish virgins, they think that they have enough of it, as we shall see, but their own estimation of their spiritual worth or value, is very, very sadly based upon self-deception. They decided that they've got enough oil, 'what's in my lamp; oh, it seems to be alright; what's in this other little container that I've got here. Oh, that seems to be alright; that should get me there O.K.' But, you see, that is their own assessment of how much oil they believe they have, so that in the parable the lamp represents the Word of God, but the oil when it is transformed into light represents the 'light of the godly character, shining forth in and from the minds of men and women. And also what they say and what they do, and what is said to be seen in their way of life, and there is David again, 'thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path'. He uses the analogy of 'light' and he says the Word of God is the light of my life, so here is a picture in this parable of Matthew 25, that when we read it carefully, is really intensely dramatic. The picture is that of people in total darkness and the only guidance and direction they have is from the Word of God. Now, if such a person

follows that light, then he or she is walking in the way of the truth, and they are manifesting mentally and morally, the mind and counsel of God, even though ever so imperfectly, because in that same Psalm 119, and we've quoted from verse 105, we look at that same Psalm and we find in verse 130 that David says there, 'the entrance of thy words giveth light. So he uses the symbology of 'light' in that twofold sense; he uses it as a 'lamp' but he also uses it in the sense of an 'illumination of his own mind'. 'The entrance of thy words giveth light', and it's the only occurrence of that particular word that is rendered as 'entrance', and it occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament bible, so obviously it relates to the unfolding of the Word into the mind of the individual, and then it becomes the light which becomes combusted and that provides guidance and direction for thought, for understanding and for action.

But, so far as the foolish virgins here are concerned, they may have their bibles with them, but they do not understand what it literally means to walk in the light of the truth, and we can take that assumption, for the simple reason, that they are not doing it, and that's why the Lord calls them 'foolish'. That is why Christ describes them as 'foolish', and then tells us that because of this lack, they will be excluded from the marriage, and the books when they are opened, will reveal who are the wise and who are the foolish. And those who are the wise, will have been those who have practiced the principle, CHRIST IN US, that leads to the HOPE OF GLORY.

And so, in verse 4 of the parable we have these words, 'But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps'. Is it a very simple statement, look what a tiny verse we have there, in verse 4, but 'the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps'. Now, it's interesting, you just think about verse 4, because you see, the ten virgins had not yet been summoned into the presence of the Bridegroom. That's important in the line of verse 4; it's very, very important; they have not yet been summoned into the presence of the Bridegroom; they have been told that He is coming. In other words, they all are enlightened as to the basic doctrines of the truth, and the basic prophetic signs of the times, but only the wise ensure that they possess an adequate supply of oil. And we know today, don't we, that the world about us, is not lacking in bibles? It is still the biggest selling book in the world. Understand that oil must be drawn from that book, and that it must become combusted into a glorious flame or light, which can fill the mind and direct the intellect into the mental and moral ways of Almighty God. How many understand that? How many understand that? And what of the believing body of Christadelphians today? How often are these things stressed in our community today? How often are they spoken of in exhortations? How often are they propounded in bible classes? and yet, what we are dealing with here, dear brethren and sisters, is the very basis of our hope of eternal salvation, CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY, so where is Christ going to find us? Will he find us among the five wise virgins, who understand the significance of this parable, and the one that is gone before? And the things that He has taught, that we might develop spiritually in preparation for His coming? Or will He number us among the five foolish virgins, who failed to find sufficient of the oil to get us to the judgment seat, in a fit frame of mind and disposition, with CHRIST IN US, so that He will identify with us, at that time? and see that we have mentally and morally struggled despite all our failings, and all our weaknesses, that we

had mentally and morally struggled to develop the likeness of His character in our lives, and the disposition of the Son of God. So, what is it, wise or foolish? Well, when the books are opened, it will all be decided.

So you see in verse 4, what it's saying is, that the wise knew what they were doing all along. They knew what they were doing and they were well prepared, but you see, verse 5 says, 'While the Bridegroom tarried', and that adds power to what is stated in verse 4, it's not as though it has been said in those early verses, that they've now got to be summoned into the presence of the Bridegroom. Verse 5 says, 'while the Bridegroom tarried', so you see, probably from this expression, we find that brethren sometimes use the term, 'if Christ should delay His coming', don't we often hear that? Often hear the expression, 'if Christ should delay His coming, then perhaps we can build a hall at such and such a place', or 'if Christ should delay His coming, we may have the opportunity to finish the extensions to our home or whatever it might be', something ecclesially. 'If Christ should tarry', is another term that we sometimes hear, but this is a good point and time to mention it, that Christ will not delay His coming, He will not delay His coming, we shouldn't really use that term in the sense that we use it. It is used in this parable to teach a lesson, but it's not saying that He's tarrying in the sense that He can't make up His mind when to come or when not to come, because the Word of God tells us, that there is a set time in the divine timetable, when the Lord returns. There is a set time to favour Zion, says the Psalmist, and the idea of that sort of delay is not really conveyed in the parable anyway. The Greek word here is 'chronizo' which is a link with a previous parable because the word occurs in chapter 24 and in that context of verses 48 and 49, the word 'delayeth' that occurs there, and all it really means is 'in the absence of his Lord'. In chapter 24, 'in the absence of his Lord, the evil servant allowed his attentions to become diverted to other things, to unprofitable things, to dangerous things that took him away from his loyalty to his master. So do the virgins in chapter 25, it seemed that He delayed because they were awaiting His coming, and being of weak mortal nature, they began to tire and to grow weary with the passing of time, and it became very, very uncertain at what time He would appear.

And then we have that very odd expression in verse 5, that has caused so much of a problem in our understanding. 'While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept', now sometimes we find that difficult to work out. We understand the five foolish virgins slumbering and sleeping, but it says they all did so, they all slumbered and slept. Now why? Well, we need to remember the parable. 'It was near midnight', verse 6 tells us that, 'it was near midnight' and how should we understand that phrase? Well, it is often thought, isn't it? that the wise virgins were sleeping when they should have remained awake. But, that is neither stated nor even implied in the parable. The Lord doesn't say that, so if we assume that the wise virgins were sleeping, when they should have remained awake, and let's be careful here, because there are parables that tell us that we must not go to sleep, we must stay awake, but those parables are teaching different things. This parable is teaching us a specific thing, but it's not stated nor is it implied in the parable that the virgins here, should have remained awake. So, the Lord doesn't say, and again, nor does He imply that none will be prepared for His coming, so therefore, the use of the term 'sleep' here or 'slumber' represents the weakness of

human nature, because we 'all' tire. We 'all' have to go to sleep; we 'all' have to rest this physical frame so that we can serve God anew on the following day. Slumbering here, represents the weakness of human nature, but even more importantly, it represents that dark period in which all who are called to the truth remain in ignorance as to the actual, literal time of the Lord's coming, and in that sense, in the context of the parable, we are all in that condition. In other words, we do not have a vision; we're not awake to see the Lord's actual coming, and we won't see Him. What will happen is, He'll come and we will then be summoned by an angel into His presence. So, that's the reason for that in verse 5; the five wise virgins are not doing something that they shouldn't be; they're bowed down with the weakness of human nature and so therefore, in the darkness of night they sleep, in the sense that their eyes are closed in that they have not a vision to see exactly when the Lord will appear, any more than the foolish will.

So, in verse 6, we have the dramatic call, 'At midnight there was a cry made, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him'. Now, that first statement, 'at midnight there was a cry made' provides a further link with the previous chapter. Just make a note of chapter 24 and verse 42, 'ye know not what hour your Lord doth come', you see, we want to be careful if we differentiate between the times and the seasons and the actual hour and the day. We are not told the hour and the day, but we can understand the times and the seasons. So, chapter 24 and verse 42 says the same as we have here, 'ye know not what hour your Lord doth come' so this cry, 'at midnight there was a cry' that cry is going to come from the angels, who come to summon the virgins into the presence of the Bridegroom, so that the books might be opened. And the cry is 'the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him' so now comes the long awaited summons. And remember, that hasn't come before, and yet in verse 4, the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps, and they made sure that they had enough. It's their preparation, that is their spirit of CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY. They have the Word, they understand it, they know accurately, they observe narrowly the way that will lead them to the kingdom of God.

And so verse 7 says, 'that then all those virgins arose' and you notice the all, they became aware that they must answer the call, and, of course, also in that regard, we need to remember, that none will be exempt from that call, who are eligible. There will be no point in any of the unwise virgins saying, if an angel suddenly appears in their appearance and says 'the Master is come and awaits you; come forth into His presence', to turn round to the angel and say, 'Oh, well look, actually I'm not quite ready. There is a lot of other people that the Lord has got to see as well, I know that, after all it goes back to the days of Abel and so forth and so on, look, will it be alright, can you give me another two or three weeks, just so I can get a little more work done on the truth and get myself a little more ready'? There'll be none of that! because, when the call comes, it will be again like God shutting the door in the ark as far as Noah and his family were concerned. God has the say in these matters; when the time comes that will be the situation 'go ye out to meet Him', and there will be no extension of time for those unready. Doesn't that in itself provide us with a tremendous exhortation, CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY? The need for that oil, the need for that

Word, the need to draw closer unto God, day by day. Closer unto the Lord Jesus Christ, to try and be like a Noah as well as a Moses, to look afar off to the reward, to be a Noah who walks with God, it's a wonderful exhortation, and there's tremendous encouragement in this parable.

And so in verse 7, 'all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps'. Now again, do you notice the word 'all'? They all became aware, they all answered the call, and trimmed their lamps. Now this is again, an important and significant thing, because the word which has been rendered as 'trimmed' does not mean to light. Their lamps are suppose to be already lit, because don't forget, they've started on the journey. The Greek word 'kosmeo' (Strong's-2885) occurs only 10 times and in every other place, the word is rendered either 'garnish or adorn'. So you might think, what on earth does that mean? Significantly, the word is used of the glorified redeemed in Revelation 21 and verse 2, where they are described as a bride 'adorned for her husband'. So, that's what they do to their lamps, so the word more accurately means 'to put in order or adjust'. So what the ten virgins begin to do, is to check their lamps and you know, with a lot of lamps, the way they're made with a wick, (I always remember as a young lad when I worked on the railways, one of my most frightening jobs, as a teenage boy about 15 or 16, used to have to be, well, this is in the olden days for the benefit of the young ones among us!) All our signal lamps on the railways were kerosene lamps, and because they couldn't trust electricity in case there was a power failure, they had this little cruz of oil, and twice a week I had to climb up these ladders to massive heights with the earth swaying beneath me, or perhaps it was me swaying above the earth, I'm not sure, and I had to take these lamps out, blow out the lamp and trim off the top of the wick, because if you don't do that, that actually burns away, and instead of just producing a light, it produces smoke. And if I forrgot to do one of those, then the glass around that lamp would be black when I came to clean it the next time and that would make a lot more work. So you have to trim your lamp and adorn it to make sure that it is giving a good, clear light. And remember, these lamps have been burning for a long time, because now, according to the parable, 'it is midnight' so the light from the lamps is growing dim, and it's starting to grow a little obscure, so as I use to do with the signal lamps, they clean them up so that the light will be bright and not produce mere clouds of smoke, and not only that, they must add more oil, of which they should all carry a good supply in reserve, to provide for this special need.

And so verse 8 says, 'And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out'. The margin is correct, it's not 'our lamps are gone out' our lamps are going out. There's still a light but they look into the oil and say, 'Wait a minute, our lamps are going to go; they're going to go any minute. Maybe we've got 5 minutes, 10 minutes, and hour, but they're going to go out because we haven't got enough oil, and it begins to dawn on the foolish virgins that they have been foolish indeed. They may be able to clean up their lamps; they may be able to trim them and give a better light, but what is the good of that, without a clear lasting light of the truth. So they find that they have no deep reserves of oil, so the foolish say to the wise, 'give us some of what you've got'.

Now, you know, brethren and sisters, this is literally going to happen in a sense that we need to think about. Let me give you an example. Take Paul and the Corinthian ecclesia, a very good example, you know especially in the second epistle to the Corinthians, we see the way in which all the way through that epistle, Paul has got to argue with that ecclesia, to prove his apostleship. And in fact, in the very last chapter, the 13th chapter, they actually doubt his right to speak as an apostle of Christ, actually doubted his apostleship. And they rejected him by and large, but there were a number in that ecclesia, as you find by reading the epistle, who remained faithful to Paul, but they were in the minority. They were not in the majority at all, they were in the minority in the ecclesia at Corinth, but these others, who thought that they were so much wiser and so much smarter, and so much better educated in the things of the truth, they stood against Paul and they withstood him, and they became his enemies in the ecclesia at Corinth, and they said to their brethren and sisters at Corinth, 'look, forget about Paul; he might have founded this ecclesia, but he's no good to us. We don't need him any more; we can do without him; you stick with us, we know what we're doing, and we'll teach you the way you ought to follow in the truth'. Imagine the judgment seat of Christ, when the books are opened. Imagine all those members of that Corinthian ecclesia of that day, all in a bit of a huddle because they all know each other, and they all come from that same period. But, yet they won't all be in a huddle, because there will be this little group over here, who will be Paul's supporters; the ones that stood by him at Corinth and upheld him, and argued his case and said, 'Look, he is an apostle; we've got to stand by him'. And over here, the wise ones who are all too ready to demean Paul and said, 'Forget about Paul; we can do better without him than we can with him. Forget him'. And then Paul called up before the Lord Jesus Christ at the judgment seat, and the words of commendation that will be heaped upon Paul, and Paul given a great position of honour, we don't know what it will be, (I personally have an idea, but it's not for me to say). Paul given a position of great honour in the kingdom, and then what's going to happen? Imagine the joy and the delight and the pleasure these brethren here will feel, when they see their great beloved apostle Paul treated in that way, and raised to honour by the Lord. But, what about these over here? We have made a dreadful mistake! what did we do wrong? Rush over to the other group and say, 'Come on, tell us where we went wrong; you tell us; put us right before we have to go and face our Lord; put us right'. Too late! too late! and it's going to happen with others as well, believe me.

We can bring it closer to home too, can't we? Brethren like Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts and the way in which they stood valiantly for and fought to establish the truth, and get brethren and sisters rooted and grounded in the faith, so that they might as the apostle Paul did, give them hope of eternal life and an inheritance in the kingdom. What about those who in succeeding generations, have derided and sneered at the works of Bro. Thomas and Bro. Roberts, and those who worked so valiantly and so courageously in the early development of our brotherhood, nearly a 150 years ago? The things that they taught, the things that they proclaimed to the world and in the ecclesias, without compromise. Things that would guide men and women to a clear understanding of the truth, and mould their thinking to develop a disposition such as we have in the theme, CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY? What about those who

derided them? What will happen then, when the books are opened? TOO LATE!
TOO LATE!

So verse 9 says, 'That 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'. It is not a display of selfishness, brethren and sisters, in verse 9, it's a feeling of inadequacy. We must understand it in that way. Who will feel so confident at the judgment seat of Christ, as to be able to give part of their faith away to somebody else? We're all going to feel inadequate, at least I hope we do. I hope that nobody is going to go forth, to the judgment seat of Christ with their chest stuck out and say, 'well, now it's time that the Lord gave me what I'm entitled to'. Because, if we do, we're going to be in for the most bitter disappointment we have ever known. We are all going to feel inadequate despite what we've built up in our faith over years. We need to have that aspect of humility in approaching the things of the coming of Christ. So they say, 'Go ye rather to them that sell'. And who are those that sell the oil of the Word? The answer is the Father and the Son. But, the Father at that time, is no longer selling, as in the days of Noah, when the door of entrance into the ark was shut tight. And so far as the Son is concerned, He is not selling either anymore because He is now the Judge. You see the point? So, in other words, the shop is shut, and what will the 5 unwise virgins do? And the answer is, they can do nothing. It is too late, but while we take that exhortation, and see how the 5 wise virgins are motivated by the concept of CHRIST IN US, THE HOPE OF GLORY, let us now imagine the joy of the 5 wise virgins. Of those that have gone before, of the Abels, the Noahs, and the Davids, and the Isaiahs and Jeremiahs, the Ezekiels, the Daniels, the Nehemiahs, the Ezras; all great wonderful men and women of the past, who will come forth and be numbered there and receive their reward for their faithfulness to God, and their faithfulness to the covenants of promise. There is no reason in the world, why every one of us cannot be numbered among the 5 wise virgins, to share the rhetorical joy that will be experienced; the sense of exaltation and spiritual ecstasy that we cannot even imagine, to be received with joy by the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be told 'you have gained an entrance into the kingdom. You have shown sufficient faith, you have dedicated your life to pleasing God and to striving to walk in His way; you've endeavoured to walk closely with Him throughout your life and probation in the truth. You're acceptable and pleasing to Him; enter into the joy of thy Lord'. May that be our lot, and let us remember, brethren and sisters, that it is only ourselves who can keep us, or prevent us from being numbered among those 5 wise virgins.