

“And The Door Was Shut”

by Chris Simmons

In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus teaches that He will come again at a time when *“no one knows”* (verse 36) and that we are therefore exhorted to *“be on the alert”* (verse 42) and *“be ready”* (verse 44) since *“the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect”* (verse 44; ESV). We are told that readiness is not defined solely by past actions but what we are presently doing, as we read in Matthew 24:45-46 (ESV) that the *“faithful and wise servant ... is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.”*

Matthew chapter 25 begins with a parable to further address the need for readiness and preparedness for the Lord’s coming. Verse 1 begins with the words, *“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ...”*. The word “then” should be noted for setting the context for the parable when the Lord comes again. In this parable (verses 1-13), Jesus compares five foolish virgins and five wise or prudent virgins who awaited the arrival of the bridegroom at a wedding feast. The word for “foolish” is from the Greek word *moros* meaning “dull and sluggish” (Vine). The word for “prudent” implies a cautious (careful) character (Strong) who is “mindful of one’s interests” (Thayer) and is “practically wise” (Vine). In the parable, Jesus noted the delay of the bridegroom and how all ten of the virgins *“became drowsy and slept”* (verse 5). All ten virgins burned their lamps while they waited but only the five prudent virgins brought along extra flasks of oil to accommodate any delays. Someone accurately observed regarding the application of this parable, *“It is not enough to have burnt, but to be burning when the Lord comes.”* It’s not a matter of whether I have served the Lord in the past, but whether I’m faithfully serving the Lord when He comes again. In the parable, the cry went forth (verse 6), *“Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.”* Unprepared for the delay, the five who were foolish went to buy the additional oil they needed. While they were away, *“the bridegroom came”* (verse 10) and then we read those haunting words *“and the door was shut.”*

The use of the term “door(s)” in the scriptures often has a symbolic meaning representing opportunities and the reference to closed or shut doors symbolizing closed or missed opportunities. These opportunities can either be good or bad. For example, in Genesis 4:7 God said to Cain after he became angry when God rejected his offering, *“If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”* Satan presents opportunities to us as well and we must be prepared to overcome the doors he presents to us. I find it interesting when thinking about Cain, that in John 18:16-17, we read that after the arrest of Jesus, *“Peter was standing at the door”* when he was questioned whether he was *“also one of this man’s disciples.”* Though the word “door” in this context is referring to a literal door, it could be said that sin was also crouching at the door of opportunity for Peter, who three times failed to *“master it.”*

Many times, doors represent positive opportunities to do good and accomplish things in the Lord’s service. We read in Acts 14:27, after Paul and Barnabas had completed their first missionary journey, *“And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the”*

Gentiles.” God had blessed them with many opportunities to preach the gospel and they were eager to report to their brethren in Antioch of those open doors. Again in I Corinthians 16:8-9, while on his third missionary journey, Paul wrote to the brethren in Corinth of opportunities to preach and teach in the city of Ephesus, *“But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”* Looking ahead, Paul prayed, and asked for the prayers of others, regarding opportunities yet to come as we read in Colossians 4:2-4, *“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity.”* To the church in Philadelphia, Jesus encouraged and exhorted the saints regarding opportunities they were to take advantage of in Revelation 3:7-8, *“He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.’”*

We can and ought to pray for three things: (1) that God would open doors for us to serve Him and let our light shine (Matthew 5:14-16) in a dark and sin-filled world, (2) that we will be selfless enough to recognize the open doors, and (3) that we would have the courage and conviction to make the most of them. We need to make the most of the open doors we are given to make our lives right with the Lord. To the church in Laodicea, Jesus exhorted them to repent and in Revelation 3:20 He said, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”* As long as we have the breath of life in us, Jesus stands knocking at the door offering us the opportunity to repent and submit to Him in obedience.

But the fact of the matter is, as taught in this parable in Matthew chapter 25, the door of opportunity to make ourselves ready is a door that will one day close – when we are not expecting it to. Jesus again said in that parable (verse 10) that *“the door was shut.”* The unprepared in verse 11 responded by saying *“Lord, Lord, open up to us”* to which Jesus responded *“truly I say to you, I do not know you.”* In responding to the disciples’ question as to whether few would be saved (Luke 13:23), Jesus answered that yes, many would not be saved due to the fact that they did not respond to the open doors presented to them. Luke 13:25-26, *“Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’”*

This parable clearly is to cause us to soberly reflect on the need to be prepared for the Lord’s return and to take advantage of the opportunity we have each day the Lord blesses us with to prepare ourselves so that our lamps will be burning upon His return.