

MORE CRISIS PARABLES...

We conclude by considering **some Crisis parables**, most set in **Jesus' last week**, all focus on the need to **"stay alert"**, remain prepared for the **Master despite his delay in returning**.

THE FOOLISH BRIDESMAIDS... in Jesus' day, a **wedding took priority**; other activities were put aside, **excused from religious duties**. All women had **proper invitations**; all were **virgins**-a reference to **their purity of character**-they all had **lamps**, a **symbol of the light** in their lives. Five were **WISE**, not referring to **their IQ** but **preparedness**. What made **them wise** was that, unlike others, they took **EXTRA OIL** in jars **lest their lamps burn out**. The **groom is delayed**- a **delay long enough** that all **10 virgins fall asleep**. The cry is made **'HE IS HERE'** On a long night, **all 10 lamps would've run out of oil**. The **unwise 5** see their error. They had **no extra supply**. **Begging the wise 5 for oil**, they **get denied**. They **race through darkened streets** seeking more oil. When they return, groom has shut the door. **Five are left out**. Like the **NARROW DOOR**, it **sounds exclusive**. Choices have **consequences**; some **choices** have **eternal ramifications**. We can elect **not to receive God's grace** or to **enter his Kingdom**, but we have **only excluded ourselves**. The **unwise 5 stand outside**, banging on the **door**, listening to the party going on without them.

HE DIDN'T CALL THEM BAD/UNWELCOME; THEY WERE JUST FOOLISH; THERE WASN'T A REASON IN THE WORLD THAT THEY SHOULD'VE MISSED THE PARTY, EXCEPT ONE. THEY DIDN'T TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY THAT SURELY WAS THEIRS, THEIRS ALONE.

THE LEAST OF THESE...one day, Jesus will **come in glory**, gather all nations **before His throne**, but **Judgment will happen**. Not by **GOD OPENING HIS BLACK BOOK**, naming names, reading off a **list of sins**, and deciding who **is in and who is out**. A weird scene:

Sheep line up on one side, goats on the other, not about the listing of our deeds, reciting our creeds, but how well we've lived out faith. Have we fed the hungry, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, visited prisoners, welcomed strangers.

It is **the only description** of the last **Judgment** in **NT** offered by **Jesus**. The **dominant note** is **surprise**. Both **sheep/goats** are **equally surprised** at the **outcome**. Sheep cared for **"the least of these"** but **didn't know** that their **good deeds** were **serving the Lord**. The **goats** were shocked to find that, in **not doing it**, they'd **neglected Lord**. He is **telling us ahead of time** so we won't be surprised, that we might learn to **see God's Image** in every **human face**.

God With Us...notice how God Judges. Both Sheep/goats are baffled before the God whose Judgments are mysterious, unpredictable. Jesus projects "the end times" just before the end of his own time. What could be more surprising than the Judge of all nations, dying as Jesus died, crying from a cross,

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This is **God's great project**: to teach us **what Jesus knew about life**; that to **live is to love**, and **not to love is not to live**. The message is resounding...

God wants his people to care, to live lives of overflowing love. God wants to save us from obsessing about ourselves, from worrying about ourselves, that we might care about others.