

Questions and Answers:

The Ten Virgins

“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.” (Matthew 25:1-13)

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Q. *What do the ten virgins represent?*

A. “As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming.

The two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith.” [Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 407]

Q. *What are the lamps they carry with them?*

A. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalms 119:105)

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.

Q. *What is the oil for the lamps?*

A. “...What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by **my spirit**, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:2-6)

“The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.” [Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 408]

Q. *What is the connection between the oil (The Holy Spirit) and the lamp (The Word of God)?*

A. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:26)

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:11-12)



“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful temptations of Satan.” [Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 408]

NOTE: A lamp is simply a means to burn oil – the lamp without the oil is but a useless piece of metal. The lamp has no inherent value of its own; only by being filled with oil does it have the ability to shed light on the path of its bearer.

Likewise, the Scriptures of themselves have no value apart from the Spirit that inspired them. The same may be said of the words of the prophets, “for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21)

Possessing a lamp without oil, then, represents having the written Word of God, but no understanding of the principles upon which it is built. As the Jews who rejected Christ because He did not come as a temporal “conquering King” but a spiritual one, based upon the prophecies that He would indeed come as a conquering King, those foolish virgins will likewise be deceived by “the masterful temptations of Satan” – and will appear to have written reason from the Word to show why.

“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding.” [Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411]

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.

Q. Who is the bridegroom?

A. “And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” (Mark 2:18-20)

“The coming of the bridegroom was at midnight--the darkest

hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history.” [Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 414]

Q. What is indicated by the bridegroom “tarrying,” or not coming at the expected time?

A. “By the tarrying of the bridegroom is represented the passing of the time when the Lord was expected, the disappointment, and the seeming delay.” [Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 1888 Edition, page 394]

NOTE: This is speaking of what was termed “The Great Disappointment” in 1844 when Christ did not return to Earth as had been expected. While the Advent people did not misunderstand the timing and principle of the prophecy, they did misunderstand the actual fulfillment thereof – specifically what the “sanctuary” to be cleansed in Daniel 8:14 signified.

Q. What is signified by “The Midnight Cry?”

A. “This parable is not a representation of open sinners, but of those who profess Christ. The bride is the church who is waiting for the second appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the proclamation of the first and second angels of Revelation 14, a special message has come to our world.

Speaking of these messages, John says: ‘I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.’

The first and second angels' messages are united and made complete in the third. - John says: ‘And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.’

Under the proclamation of these messages the cry was made, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh.’ The believers in these messages were compelled to go out from the churches because they preached the second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven. The whole world was to hear the message, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.’ Many who heard these messages thought they would live to see Christ come; but there was a delay in the coming of the Bridegroom, in order that all might have an opportunity to hear the last message of mercy to a fallen world.” [Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1899]

NOTE: The Three Angels' Messages are to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord; the "midnight cry" that instructs them to "Go ye out to meet Him" is the culmination of this same Message.

Q. If the parable was about the events of and surrounding 1844, does it have a dual fulfillment in the very last days?

A. "The first, second, and third angels' messages are to be repeated. The call is to be given to the church: 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. . . . Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.' [Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1899]



NOTE: Quoted above is the fourth angel's message found in Revelation 18; it is here shown to be the repeating of the first three angel's messages.

Q. Since the Three Angels' Messages are to be repeated under the Fourth Angel, can we expect the rest of the parable to be applicable to the "second sounding" as well?

A. "Many who went forth to meet the Bridegroom under the messages of the first and second angels, refused the third, the last testing message to be given to the world, and a similar position will be taken when the last call is made." [Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1899]

Q. What is the "Third Angels' Message" – which many refused – called the "last testing message"?

A. "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:9-12)

Q. Does this mean that the "midnight cry" that awakens the sleeping virgins is related to the Image and Mark of the Beast (also called "the mark of his name")?

A. The above quotations and Scriptures leave no doubt upon this point – it is an unequivocal "Yes".

Q. What are the principles of the Word regarding what the mark and image of the beast are?

A. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:11)

"The 'image to the beast' represents that form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches shall seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas." [Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 445]

"But in the very act of enforcing a religious duty by secular power, the churches would themselves form an image to the beast; hence the enforcement of Sundaykeeping in the United States would be an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image." [Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 449]

NOTE: The meaning of "worship" [*Heb. Shachah*] is literally to bow down in deference and acknowledgment of a superior, with the direct connotation of rendering service to that acknowledged authority. (Matthew 4:8-10)

Why, then, is the "worship" of the beast so expressly forbidden, if we are commanded to "be subject unto the higher powers", (Romans 13:1,2) including governments, of which beasts are a symbol? (Daniel 7:17,23)

The reason is that, while rendering service to the rulers of the land is our Christian duty, when the government shall make a law that conflicts with the requirements of God, we are to "obey God rather than man". (Acts 5:29, Daniel 3:18) The worship of the beast, then, must consist of violating the requirements of God in favor of a human enactment or decree, which is signified by "the mark of the beast."

The beast of Revelation 13 is none other than the Papacy, as a careful study of the books of Daniel and the Revelation will show. An image to the beast must then consist of another religious organization following in the same steps as the Papacy – controlling the civil power to enforce religion by law.

The wording of the first angel's message is nearly identical to the wording of the Sabbath commandment, which instructs us to cease from labour in acknowledgement of God's authority over all that He has made – in essence, the Sabbath commandment is the commandment to worship God. (Revelation 14:7, Exodus 20:11) The mark of the beast, then, is a civil law that is enforced on God's people, at the request of a religious organization, that requires them to render obedience to man's decrees as opposed to God's, or, to honor man's Sabbath as opposed to God's.

Q. Did Ellen White say that the enforcement of Sunday-keeping was the only way in which the mark of the beast could come about?

A. No. She stated the principle of the Word, that “in the very act of enforcing a religious duty by secular power, the churches would themselves form an image to the beast”. This is the equation, this is the principle. She then states, “hence”, or because of this, “the enforcement of Sundaykeeping would be an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image”. Other statements in the Spirit of Prophecy reflect this line of thought. Sunday legislation was written of as the mark of the beast, not because there was a divine vision that “The Mark shall be Sunday worship, the Image shall be Sunday churches uniting with the state”, but because there was a divine principle, “The Mark shall be regarding a false Sabbath, the Image shall be apostate Protestantism controlling civil power”. In her day, a Sunday law was being brought before Congress for legislation by the Sunday churches; her writing in this regard was an application of the principle to present-day events.



“Regarding the testimonies, nothing is ignored; nothing is cast aside; but time and place must be considered.” [Ellen G. White, *1 Selected Messages*, page 57]

Q. Doesn't “a false Sabbath,” or the principle of the mark being a Sabbath issue, mean that it must be a Sunday law?

A. “There remaineth therefore a rest [*Gk. Sabbitismos; literally, a keeping of the Sabbath*] to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” (Hebrews 4:9-10)

“Now I want to state a little further upon the principle that no Christian, being a citizen of the kingdom of God, can of right start any procedure in connection with civil government. After it is started by the government itself, that is another question . . . I repeat therefore, that upon the principles which govern kingdoms and governments, the very principle of the law in heaven, or law in earth, a Christian cannot start any procedure in connection with civil government. And of all Christians, Seventh-day Adventists cannot do it. The very keeping of the Sabbath forbids it.” [A.T. Jones, *1895 General Conference Bulletin*]

NOTE: The Sabbath, like all other points of the law, has a spiritual keeping and a literal keeping. The Jews were “Sabbath-keepers” after the letter of the law, yet crucified the Lord of the Sabbath while preparing for their keeping of it. Hebrews chapter 4 speaks in detail about the keeping of the true Sabbath of God, as opposed to simply the seventh day. To seek protection or vengeance at the hands of any other than Christ, then, is to violate the Sabbath commandment as surely as to keep Sunday holy in the place of Saturday.

Essentially, to take a prerogative that belongs to God alone is to put ones-self in the place of God, and to violate the Sabbath in Spirit by not ceasing from our own works as He ceased from His. “Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and

he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:52,53)

Q. Is protecting the Church a prerogative of God alone, or is the Church to protect and avenge itself through secular power?

A. “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!” (Isaiah 31:1)

“But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.” (Hosea 1:7)

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” (Romans 12:19)

Q. Would being a member of a church or denomination that engages in Sabbath-breaking, be it literal or spiritual, make us guilty of that sin by association?

A. “For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.” (Isaiah 9:16)

“Thus by choosing a heathen ruler, the Jewish nation had withdrawn from the theocracy. They had rejected God as their king. Henceforth they had no deliverer. They had no king but Caesar. To this the priests and teachers had led the people. For this, with the fearful results that followed, they were responsible. A nation's sin and a nation's ruin were due to the religious leaders.” [Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, Page 737]

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” (2 John 1:10-11)

NOTE: If to bid an evil man “God Speed” or take him into your house is to be a partaker of his evil deeds, how much more shall a man be a partaker of the evil deeds of that church whose actions he lends his time, efforts, membership, and tithes to support!

Q. Regarding the name Seventh-day Adventist, is it of men's invention, or of God's?

A. “We are Seventh-day Adventists. Are we ashamed of our name? We answer, ‘No, no! We are not. It is the name the Lord has given us. It points out the truth that is to be the test of the churches.’” [Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages 2*, page 384]

“As to the name Seventh-day Adventists: I was shown in regard to the remnant people of God taking a name. . . . No name which we can take will be appropriate but that which accords with our profession and expresses our faith and marks

us a peculiar people. The name Seventh-day Adventist is a standing rebuke to the Protestant world. . . . The name Seventh-day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind.” [Ellen G. White, *The Early Years Volume 1*, page 438]

Q. Are there any examples showing how are we to respond to laws based upon men falsely claiming ownership of that which is God’s?

A. “When the laws of men conflict with the word and law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be. The law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law. The slave is not the property of any man. God is his rightful master, and man has no right to take God’s workmanship into his hands, and claim him as his own.” [Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Volume 1*, page 202]

Q. Are there, then, any laws in place that are 1) the result of apostate Protestantism controlling civil power 2) to enforce religious duties by secular law, 3) that force believers to choose between resting in God’s protection or obeying men 4) in honoring what can rightly be called “the mark of his (the beast’s) name”?

A. Yes. In the trademark of the name “Seventh-day Adventist”, we see all four points fulfilled:

1) The General Conference Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists, on behalf of the entire denomination, applied for and received a trademark on the name Seventh-day Adventist from the Federal government. They may (and do) invoke federal magistrates and federal punishments upon those who dissent while using this name.

2) The name Seventh-day Adventist, as shown, was given by God to His people for their use. To bring civil penalties and fines upon those who obey this instruction is to enforce religious duties by secular law in the plainest of language.

3) The enforcement of this mark forces men to choose between a) Giving up the name Seventh-day Adventist and failing to rest in the protective power of God, denying His name, b) Joining the General Conference and thus partaking of their Sabbath-violating spirit and civil actions by membership, or c) Disobeying the trademark law.

4) A reading of any trademark court document in which the Conference is involved will return the phrase “Plaintiff’s mark ‘Seventh-day Adventist.’” Repeatedly and forcefully, it is stated that the mark of the General Conference is the name “Seventh-day Adventist.” As such, not only is this law in regards to the mark of a name, but the very language of trademark law is replete with the most obvious and flagrant of wording to this effect.

Q. Does this mean that the prophecy has been fulfilled in a way different than most have expected?



A. Yes. Those who have oil with their lamps will see the principles that govern the matter. The foolish virgins will cling to the “Sunday law” ideology, with as much apparent evidence for their position as the Jews had for rejecting Christ’s earthly mission. The way of God has always been to test the hearts of His people to see who has the oil of the Spirit of understanding to make worthwhile the lamp of the Word. To cling to the Sunday law teaching regarding the mark while ignoring the Trademark law, which fulfills the exact same principles, is to have a lamp, but no oil.

Q. Why are the foolish virgins represented as having had oil in their lamps, but not extra?

A. In expecting the Sunday law application of the third angel’s message and preparing for protesting against and resisting it, they are shown to have had enough oil for that fulfillment, but **only** that fulfillment. Their protest is not based upon a hatred for the violation of principle. The Bridegroom tarrying indicates a longer period than initially expected, a change in the specifics of their wait; and as they did not prepare for anything other than their expectations, they are disappointed, and left in darkness. Truly it is said of them, “They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles.”

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.

Q. Why could the wise not share their oil with the foolish?

A. “Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in [the land], as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” (Ezekiel 14:20)

“This is the class that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. When startled from their lethargy, they discern their destitution, and entreat others to supply their lack; but in spiritual things no man can make up another’s deficiency. The grace of God has been freely offered to every soul. The message of the gospel has been heralded, ‘Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ Rev. 22:17. But character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit’s working.

It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,’ and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God.

It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied." [Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411]

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.

Q. If the bridegroom is Christ, and the great final test comes when human probation is closed, who are "those that sell", the spurious vender that the foolish virgins "went to buy" their oil from?

A. "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more [...] cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men." (Revelation 18:10-13)

Q. Where is this description of fallen Babylon found?

A. Revelation 18; it is immediately after the fourth angel's message under which the first three angel's messages are to be repeated, as mentioned earlier in the study.

Q. What is the Adventist understanding of what constitutes Babylon fallen?

A. "When the early church departed from God and imbibed pagan errors, she became Babylon. When she united with the state, she fell, and, as an organization, was the body of Christ no longer." [*First Quarter Sabbath School*, Lesson IX, February 29, 1896]

Q. What is the sure course of action when the true church falls through uniting with the state?

A. "It has ever been true that a backslidden body, one that has turned from God's word to men, from God's power to the state, was never reformed in itself. Invariably God's message has called out those from the fallen church who would do His will and preach His gospel. Israel went down to Egypt for help, and their captivity and loss of power followed. Out of the captives God gathered a faithful band to do His work. The Jewish church failed, and God called out the apostolic church to do His bidding. The Roman Church failed, and out of it God called the churches of the Reformation. Some of these churches failed to advance, and God called out others to bear His gospel to the world such as the Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Disciple, Adventists. His last 'called-out' people will know no standard but His word, no power but His Spirit." [*First Quarter Sabbath School*, Lesson X, March 7, 1896]

"I tell you now that you must have divine enlightenment. If you do not seek this, Satan will set up his hellish banner right in your homes, and you will be so blinded to the real nature of his deceptions that you reverence it as the banner of Christ."
[Ellen G. White]
