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SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1994

I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES

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Study #5

While the Bridegroom Tarrieth

Reading: Matthew 25:1-13

Good Morning My Beloved Brethren and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ is now hurdling towards His destruction, if that's the way you want to look at it. He's brought Himself into a situation where He is in absolute conflict with all of the authorities of the land and they are going to kill Him, and He is fully aware of that fact. He wants to hasten the process. We find Him at this particular juncture in the history, in the record, on the Mount of Olives, and He's with His disciples and they're looking at Jerusalem, and He tells them that city is going to be destroyed, and everything that's associated with it will be wiped out. Remember the last parable that we had looked at, the parable of the wedding garment, there was a man who was naked, in other words, he was unprepared. Jerusalem, likewise, would be unprepared when its destruction would come. And so, the whole lesson concerning Jerusalem itself, is of a people who were unprepared, and unwilling to prepare themselves. Well, in addition to that, brethren and sisters, He talks about the time in which He will come. What the days will be like, so He's talking about these days that we are living in today.

If we look at Matthew chapter 24, verse 37, the Lord Jesus Christ says, 'But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in those days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be'. So, Jerusalem is going to be unprepared, but so will the people, living in the days, like unto the days of Noah, that Christ returns in. They will be unprepared likewise. They shall be taken completely by surprise. So, He's alerting the disciples to the fact that there is a real risk that they will be unprepared for His return, or that His people will be unprepared for His return. Definitely, the world will be utterly unprepared for His return, as Jerusalem was.

And then, brethren, He exhorts them to be watchful, verse 42, 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman (master) 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' (or be broken through, or what happened in those days was, the door was an impenetrable part of the house, but

because of the fact that many of the houses had clay walls, it was easy to dig through a wall and make it into the building. So, houses were broken through in this way.) 'But, if a man knew a thief was coming, he'd be watchful'. And if he was prepared for a thief's coming all the time, then the thief would never be able to break through into his house. But, this is once again talking about 'unpreparedness', in particular, for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, verse 44, 'Therefore, be ye (unlike these other people) be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household to give them (not) meat (to give them their food) in due season?' What is He talking about brethren? Who then is a faithful and wise servant? You notice the order of these two words, he's faithful then he's wise. This brethren, is a parable for arranging brethren, for readers, exhorters, presiders, lecturers. This is a parable that is directly suited to the concerns and the need for preparation, that we as serving brethren in our ecclesias have, because we bear the burden of the life of the ecclesia on our shoulders. So then, 'who is a faithful and wise servant', the servant is faithful first, and then he is wise. And what does that word 'faithful' mean, brethren? The word 'faithful' means 'trustworthy', he's trustworthy. It means that he is trustworthy in the sense that he trusts God and can be relied upon and trusted likewise. He a man that takes the word of truth, this is how the word is used through the epistles, he is faithful in his 'holding' of the truth, that is what is the faithfulness associated with this man. He is a man that is reliable and can be relied upon. So, look at it from the point of view of a man, who is doctrinally sound, who is faithful to his commission, as one who is a servant to the ecclesia and who is an individual who can be relied upon by the ecclesia. To be sound, stable and steady.

But, you notice he's faithful first, then, it says, he's wise. Now the word 'wise' brethren, means 'prudent', 'thoughtful', 'considerate' 'sensible'. The word stresses the showing forth of understanding in action. He's a practical individual; he's well prepared to deal with problems and issues or difficulties that come up. Now, think in your mind of the arranging brethren that you have elected in your ecclesias. No doubt, if you really search your heart, the first thing that comes to mind, when you are selecting them, is their ability to make decisions; is their ability to be practical when difficulties come up. That's the first thing that comes to mind, isn't it? In fact, what can happen in our ecclesias, in our arranging boards, is that brethren become 'pragmatists' or do what is expedient at the time, what seems to be 'logical and sensible'. But you note that the first thing that makes this servant acceptable, is that he is faithful, in other words, the Word of life is the basis for his wisdom. It's not commonsense, though that is necessary in an arranging brother; it's not just worldly logic and the ability to make decisions and to resolve difficulties that come up. It's all of these things firmly entrenched in faithfulness to a message that he's received, and a Word that he has been given. Biblical principles, and if you are an arranging brother, think of the last time that you sat around a table, and opened your bibles to make a decision, or referred to scripture in the making of a decision. And if you haven't done that, well, it's something for us to begin to do. He is a 'faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set him over his household', it's not the servant's household. The household, the ecclesia, does not belong to and isn't managed like a business, by the arranging brethren, it is Christ's household and they

are servants to servants. The word 'servant' means a 'slave', he doesn't own himself, he doesn't own his time, he doesn't own any of his possessions. They're all at the service of his lord. He's a faithful man, brethren. He is a man who places his reliance upon God and upon the hope of the kingdom and the hope of eternal life.

Remember that little phrase, that little verse in Isaiah 26:3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, or thou wilt keep him in peace, peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee. Trust in Yahweh forever: for in Yahweh is everlasting strength', is everlasting strength. Brethren, we have to be the kind of men that truly believe the truth. The word 'belief' as Bro. Carl Newth was saying earlier, means to 'rely on something' to 'lean on it', so when I'm leaning on this lectern, that's what belief is all about. When your mind is stayed on Yahweh, you are leaning on Him. You are trusting in Him and relying on Him, not on your own logic and your own individual intelligence and intellect. Too many of our decisions are made on and are based on those faulty things. Too few of our decisions are being made on the basis of the Word of God. That servant, brethren, that servant has been set over the household, and what's his job? His job is to give them their food in due season. 'In due season' means 'as it is required', 'as it is necessary' in due season. He has to give them their food, now what's the food? What is the food that arranging brethren are to be giving to their ecclesias?

Let's go to 2 Timothy . We're going to go to 2 Timothy and we're going to look at some advice that Paul gave to an arranging brother, and ecclesial elder, a man whose job it was to carry the ecclesia on his shoulders, and in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 15, this is what he says to Timothy, 'Study', that doesn't mean 'open your books', it means give diligence, be diligent to do this, and part of that involves 'study' actual study of the Word, but, to study to do something means be diligent to do this'. Be earnestly desirous of doing this, and do it. 'Be diligent to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth'. Now, the words 'rightly dividing' are a Greek word that means to 'cut through difficult material'. It might refer to taking a knife and cutting through a hard piece of leather; it might refer to moving through a rocky area to create a road, but, it also meant to 'take bread, to take food and break it into small pieces for the feeding of a family'. That's what that word also meant. And Paul is talking to Timothy about being an individual who relies on and teaches the word of truth. Not stupid, human nonsense, not the idiotic business education that we come to the ecclesia with, and we want to talk about some nonsensical seminar that we took that taught us a lesson about this, that or the other idiotic concept, and we try somehow to graft that, in an ugly way, into what scripture is saying. That's not what he's talking about, the word of truth is what has to come out of our mouths, that's what we have to take and know, and break it down small, for the feeding of our brethren and sisters, in due season, as it is necessary. That's what it's all about. So, if we are to be workmen that are not going to be ashamed when Christ returns, we have to be the kind of men that are 'rightly dividing' the word of truth. The revised version also says 'handling it aright', in other words, not using it to 'peddle controversy', not using it for our weaknesses and our base, fleshly, instinctive desire to promote ourselves above the good of the ecclesia, and to make our ideas and our thoughts, and whatever little whippoowill ideas come along, to make those the

prominent issues. We need to feed our ecclesias; we need to rightly divide the word of truth, not the ideas of current, humanistic philosophy, but the word of truth. So that's what we are to break up to feed the ecclesia with.

So when we go back to Matthew and we look at what He is saying in chapter 24, regarding the servant, He's saying to those brethren there, He isn't talking to them about not being prepared and how to be watchful, so He says to them, 'part of that is being a faithful first, and second then, a wise, practical slave, whose every waking moment is something that belongs to God, and therefore, belongs to the ecclesia. Faithful and wise servant, and remember brethren, don't be lifted up in your pride, in the position you occupy in the ecclesias, it is God in the end, Who has set you there, over the household, to give them their food. So, we have to be brethren that are not just managing issues, and difficulties, and problems that come up, but, we have to be feeding, feeding and tending; it's the work of a shepherd, isn't it? because that's what we are. WE ARE SHEPHERDS to the ecclesia, giving the ecclesia direction and bringing forth life from it. This is the Master who set the servant over the household, it wasn't just to look after their needs. It was also to promote productivity within the household. Their job was to ensure that people were doing well, that they were well fed. That they were healthy, but also that they were active, that they were doing something, so it's part of the job we have as arranging brethren, to keep the ecclesia occupied, in so far as we can do it. There is nothing that can be healthier for us than being occupied in the truth of an ecclesia, the elderly and the young, putting all hands to work. One of the most wonderful things about this bible school is that is exactly what is done. It's not done in other schools; everybody works here and because of that, everybody has a vested interest in the school. Everybody feels that they're a part of it; an integral part of it. That is how the householder requires the servant to help his household to grow. He wants them to be active. He doesn't want the servant to be looking after a group of people in such a way as to keep them fed and infirm and passive. He wants them to produce something. WATCHFULNESS, watchfulness requires that we are productive and useful in God's truth, all of us together, but the example must come from the arranging brethren, because the arranging brethren are part-time shepherds, then your brethren will be part-time brethren and sisters. That's just the way it is; it a simple, basic fallout.

Now, we go on further, 'to give them their meat in due season. Blessed, blessed brethren and sisters, 'is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh, shall find so doing'. Blessed is that servant, happy is that servant, that servant will be blessed by God when his lord comes and finds him so doing.' You notice, it's not 'finds him having done this', he finds him doing it. This is a man, this is a servant, this is an arranging brother, who realizes his work is never done. He's working with his family, he's always working with the ecclesia; he's always there calling people, encouraging people, writing people, stopping to talk to people, having people with his wife over to his home that he might tend them and look after them and encourage them in his home. He's an individual who goes out to help people, not somebody who's idle; he's not somebody whose work is past tense. It's present continuous; it's continuing on and on. Always going on, that's the kind of servant that's going to be happy, blessed, when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, and you know something odd, brethren, when we're doing that,

we're happy in the process. We might be physically tired, we might be exhausted, but there is an internal peace, a happiness in helping and strengthening those who need help and strengths. That's our work as arranging brethren, when in doctrinal purity, we need to amend our way of living and we need to support the ecclesia on our backs. We are the ground that the ecclesia stands on, that it might stand erect, that's what we are. We are not managers over we are servants under the ecclesia, supporting it from underneath.

He says after that, verse 48 of Matthew chapter 24, 'After that when he returns I say unto you that you shall make him ruler over all his goods', so we might think that there comes a time when our work is all over and then we retire from ecclesial service. We hold back and we don't have to do anything anymore. People face retirement in the world and then they assume at the same time as they retire from their labours in the world, they retire from ecclesial life. They retire from their need to continue to serve others, and Christ is saying, 'No, no, that not true at all'. You work right to the day that you cease working, when Christ returns or when your heart stops beating, because when you stop working, when He returns, or when you stand at His judgment seat you are going to be given more work to do. But this time, you'll be given work to do, with a mind that is not like the mind you have now, with all that is fleshly, with your nature, plucked out of you, and perfection, then we will be perfect slaves and servants to our Lord and to His God. Isn't it wonderful! and so our great ambition really is not to be in the kingdom, not to get into the kingdom, right? but to get into the kingdom to work forever, to labour with eternal life without getting exhausted, without getting tired out, without having all the trouble that the flesh is heir to, but perfectly manifesting Yahweh mentally. Oh, how we should look forward to that brethren, morally, how we should be labouring to do that now, physically, what a thing to look forward to. To manifest Yahweh, He who will be mighty Ones, fashioned out of little fragile you and me. That's what we have to look forward to, life and labour in the kingdom. Now, if we are to be looking forward to the labour of being king-priests in God's kingdom, teachers and rulers and nurturers and nourishers, then, we ought to be doing that now. And just as we are looking forward with happiness to that event, that's what we ought to be looking forward with happiness for now.

And so the activity of the truth, though it can depress us, depending on how difficult the problem is, in the end, it should be a source of joy for us, a source of encouragement. This is what makes us alive today, together with the word of God alive inside of us. Our labour in the truth for each other, pushing beyond the barriers of selfishness and individual desire for time for ourselves, and our own selfish needs or desires, pushing beyond those.

So, there is another kind of servant that He talks about, He says in verse 48, 'but and if that evil servant should say in his heart, my lord delayed his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken: The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expected not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder'. (And shall cut him asunder or cut him off), 'and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'. This kind of

brother, brethren, is the kind of brother who sees his role within the ecclesia, to not be a servant underneath, supporting and nourishing and purifying and keeping clean, but sees his role as a brutish, self-willed, manager or tyrant within the ecclesia. Now, we all have that basic innate weakness in everyone of us because of our human frailty, our nature that drives us in the direction of evil doing. But, there are times when brethren get completely out of hand, within their role as arranging brethren, they forget that their role is to feed the ecclesia, and keep it alive and to keep it doctrinally sound. They instead, see themselves as people who are there to be continually depressing, disciplining, shoving down the brethren underneath them, so that they keep themselves pre-eminent. Or, in their bored situations, they're brethren who do this; there are brethren who so assert with their dominant characters and personalities, that they drown out everybody else. They drown everybody else out, that's an evil servant. That is an evil servant. He's a man who said in his heart, 'Look, my lord delays his coming', he may never have said it with his mouth, but the belief that Christ is coming now is not with him, he doesn't have that sense, he's not even aware when Christ comes and takes him completely by surprise. Rather than feeding the ecclesia, he is the one there beating it. He's beating the ecclesia, he's beating it down to make himself the pre-eminent one in its midst. That's what this brother does.

Look at what it says also, 'he begins to beat his fellow servants, but he also eats and drinks with the drunken', where have we heard that before? Well, we heard it a few verses before. 'As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Son of man. For as it was in the days that they were before the flood, they were eating and drinking', yes, we look at this, referring to the fact that they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, normal things, without any reference to God, without submission to Him. But, it's more than that; it's referring to eating and drinking in the sense of giving one's self with abandonment to what the world has to offer. So, what's eating and drinking? well, it's eating and drinking the world's principles, the world's logic, the world's way of doing things. The world's way of pushing people around and down so that it might assert itself. A wielding of authority and an irresponsible and sometimes cruel and hard-hearted way over other people, that's the kind of thing that this servant is doing. So, he's drunk; he's eating and drinking with the drunken, with those whose perception is unclear, fuzzy, misty. They haven't got a vision, they're drunk, and so this man manages to make it from decision to decision, from problem to problem, creating more problems himself. He's eating and drinking with the drunken and he's a smiter of his fellow servants. 'The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he is not looking for him and shall cut him asunder and then he will receive the portion that he deserved, the portion that is going to be given to the play actors'. To those whose life was a life of masks, to those shepherds, who, rather than feeding the sheep, ran and ate the best pasture for themselves, and then trampled the rest of it. To those shepherds who went into the pure water and drank it up, and then ran through a dead heat and made it money for the other sheep. That's what the shepherd did in Ezekiel's day; brethren, we take the water of the truth, of the Word, we take the green pasture of God's principles, and a funny thing isn't it, some of the most knowledgeable brethren who ought to know better, having eaten of that Word and drunk of it, will muddy it and defile it, by twisting it and corrupting it, so that those that come after to feed, well, what are they eating and

drinking? They are eating trampled down principles that cannot feed them and sustain them because they don't know what they're eating anymore. They are drinking water that's muddy and makes them sick, so we've got to be doctrinally sound, and to be doctrinally sound we need to know what we believe. And to know what we believe we must read our bibles and we must read the works that have been written, that have sustained our community for 150 years, which in themselves, present the truth with such clarity and vigour, and inspiring warmth and conviction, that they have the capacity with scripture to build us into brethren who are faithful and wise. This servant muddied the waters, trampled the pasture, and beat his fellow labours. For him, there will be rejection at the judgment seat, may it not be so for any of us, as arranging brethren, and if we ever had a tendency in that direction, may we pull back and change, to feed, encourage and strengthen, that we will continue to do that in the future, until the Lord comes to another parable, to strengthen the point in the minds of those that are sitting there, that have just heard this very sobering message.

He says, 'Look, the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom'. Now, who are the ten virgins? In Eastern marriages, their business as bridesmaids, these ten virgins, they were ten bridesmaids, their business was to prepare the bride and make her ready. But, not just that, they were to go ahead of the bride, along the way, to wait for the coming of the groom, then they might bring the groom to the bride, and accompany him to the bride. That's what their job was, the job of these ten virgins, these ten bridesmaids. So, He's just continuing what He's already been talking about concerning the wise servant, whose job it is to feed and prepare the household, to make it ready for when the Master comes back to find it, fed, healthy, waiting for Him. That's what the bridesmaids' job is. Now, we're looking at this from an exhortational basis, and there is much exhortation to draw for us.

So, here are ten virgins. Why virgins? Because, these are men who have struggled hard to keep themselves unspotted from the world, undefiled by worldly ways of reasoning, worldly logic, and doing what is expedient. They're virgins because they are faithful to their God, that's what they've striven for, at least, that is what they are suppose to have striven for. What it really come down to is that this is their status, they are suppose to be ten virgins.

The ten virgins take their lamps. Now, what is the lamp, brethren and sisters? What's the lamp? 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet', the word of truth, so they have an understanding of the principles of God, that's the light that they have, but there is oil that is continually replenishing that, and the oil is the word itself. We come to a knowledge of the truth, brethren, and we think sometimes that that is enough. We don't need to continue building on that, and before we know it, we run out of oil because we never took the time to replenish it. We've never been in our bibles. So, here they are, they've taken their lamps, so they all have lamps, all ten of them, and they take five of them, no oil at all. There are five foolish ones that have no oil. Now, here's another thing to bear in mind, brethren, these people when they were bridesmaids, went right out publicly, so even people that were not connected to the wedding at all, saw what

they were doing, or saw the results of their work. And so, even people that are not connected to the truth around us, see the effort as it demonstrates itself, in results in our ecclesias. People on the outside know when we have, what they call it, their church. They see it, they say it, 'ah, I see them, but I know what they do when they go inside. They're singing hymns! Christadelphians! But I work with a couple, I know what they're like'. And so, they see publicly; there we are with our lamps, they know what we ought to be sometimes, better than we do. Well, there are these ten virgins, five don't have any oil, they didn't take it with them. They didn't think that they needed to deepen their knowledge of the principles of God's truth and the Lord is talking about watchfulness in these parables. He's talking about preparedness; we are going to be utterly unprepared if we don't know our bibles and we are going to be utterly unprepared to help the problems and controversies that come up in our ecclesias, if we don't know our bibles. So here they are, five foolish, and they took no oil with them, brethren, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. So, what is it that makes them wise? Same word that is used of the 'wise servant' in the previous parable. What is it that makes them wise? They have the lamp and they have the oil to draw on, to continually replenish the lamp, to give the truth a light in them, inside of them, in their lives around them, to give light to those that they are preparing. They were preparing the bride and they are waiting for the bridegroom, that they might accompany Him to the bride that they have been preparing. So, they've got the oil with them. The wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

'While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept'. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept, brethren. Bro. Roberts saw this as 'the long period of time between the initial giving of the gospel message or at least, the giving of it by Christ and even in the promises back in Abraham's day, right up to the time of His return. And all who would fall asleep in the Lord, right through that time, to be waken up when He returns, when He arrives'. That is right; Bro. Roberts is right in his interpretations of these parables, but as an exhortational point, brethren, when the Lord returns to the earth, because of the problems that we have in our ecclesias, the difficulties that we are undergoing, the foolish are always asleep. They never know what hits them when it does hit them, but we through sheer exhaustion, because of the labour that is required of us, can also find ourselves falling asleep. We need to take heed to that and to wake up and to be watchful. We need to be people who are always looking for His return, getting our children ready for His return, making our wives ready for His return, that we might continue that process, in making the ecclesia ready for His return. They fall asleep, yes, because of the long time between the message being given and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

'But, at midnight, there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him. Then all the virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps'. They all get up and they're trimming. Wonderful, they trim their lamps which means they make them presentable; they put them in working order. Bro. Roberts says the following, 'Never so earnestly was this done by them before. Furbishing up memory, reviewing the ways of their probation, fixing their minds on the truth, casting themselves in prayer on the Father's mercy', and that's what we'll be doing. 'The foolish that went to sleep with

empty vessels, find them still in that state. For everyone will rise at the resurrection in the spiritual state in which death overtakes them'. Very sobering words for us, isn't it? Even those who have been prepared, will still have that careful regard to, 'how did we do in our probation?' casting ourselves on the mercy of God, and seeking forgiveness, hoping for life, recognizing that we couldn't do it even of ourselves and that only He can do it for us. But, there will be that love, that hope and also for all of us, whether we admit it or not, that little anxiety. But, for those that are foolish, those of us, well, we shall have gone to sleep already, we sleep-walked our way through the life of the ecclesia, and we awake, and we're asleep again. We find we don't know what's happened; life has passed us by. Every opportunity that we have had to labour, we missed. We didn't take the opportunities that arose; we didn't look at what it was that we believed, so when difficulties came up, we found ourselves incapable of dealing with the controversial issues. We were pulled this way or that way; we never knew what was biblical. We only understood what was logical and expedient, and so when we find ourselves in this position, we're at a loss as to what to do. And even the requests that we make of the wise virgins, demonstrates our totally foolish attitude to ecclesial life to the truth and what is required of us. Because, then we'll say, when we notice that they have their lamps and oils; and our lamps have gone out, 'give us of your oil, for our lamps have gone out'. The knowledge I had, the little ability that changed my character and had the light shining forth, albeit very fitfully and very doubtedly, is not enough to sustain me now'. They will be terrified, but the wise will answer and say, 'Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves'.

But, of course, there isn't anyone to buy from. They can't do anything about it now; it's too late. Who are they going to buy it from? It's impossible. There is going to be a day, brethren, but it will be too late for us to do the work which needed to be done, that we saw needed doing. There will be a day when it will be too late to study and to take God's principles into our hearts and change our characters and our lives. That day is rapidly approaching. Could be today; could be tomorrow. At midnight comes the cry. We're taken by surprise. Now is the time for us to change, now is the time for us to amend our lives and to really make the truth, not part of our lives, but life itself. These people ran out of time. That could be us when the Lord returns.

'And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him, to the marriage: and the door was shut'. You notice, it is they that were ready, they that were ready, brethren and sisters, so that is what this whole parable is all about, READINESS. Readiness for all the ecclesia, but readiness that is encouraged and stirred up by, in particular, the arranging and serving brethren of that ecclesia, who give the ecclesia its spiritual direction. Who give it health or are responsible for all of its ills, that's what we see here. THEY WERE READY.

Verse 11, 'After the door had been shut, the other virgins come, saying, Lord, lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not'. I don't know you. I don't know you. What does that mean? Christ is looking for a reflection of Himself in us. When He sees Himself in us, the extent to which the Lord Jesus Christ

sees Himself manifested in us, looking back at Him, is the extent to which we can hope for life. Now, when He looks at us and sees something of Himself, there's something He recognizes. But when He looks at us and sees nothing of Himself in us, He just sees Dev, He doesn't see Christ manifested in Dev, He just sees Dev, who's made his decisions based on logic, what seems sensible, what was expedient, who was drunken with the drunken of this world because, he might not necessarily been drinking alcohol, but he certainly was drinking in the world's principles and He looks at him and says, 'Look, I don't know you'. He means that! It's not just words that are said of rejection. These are true things He's saying; I don't know you, you've got nothing of Me in you. You're not related to Me. I look at you and how you've lived your life and I see nothing of Me in you, so I don't know you'. I don't know you, brethren. 'I know you not; watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh'.

You know, there's another area where that picture, that horrible picture of Christ not knowing somebody, comes up. Bro. Carter said something about that; let's go to Matthew chapter 7, comparing the two records, Bro Carter said, 'In the one there is an empty profession, in the other there's empty oil vessels; in both, in both, listen to this, in both there has been a failure to do. That's the common element in both.' Matthew chapter 7 beginning, brethren and sisters, at verse 24, 'Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock', ( whoever hears what Christ says and does what He says is like a man that builds his house upon a rock). Let's back up a few verses and begin at verse 21, 'Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,' (that's what they said in the other parable) 'shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven'. We might think brethren, that we have the time to work around how to do the will of our Father in heaven. But, that is not the case. We're to be doing it now, we're to be doing what He wants us to do. That's why we have to know our bibles, to know what He requires of us. Not people who say 'Lord, Lord' will make it into His kingdom, but those who do what He requires. V.22 'Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have we cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? So, these are people who have done things in the truth, but 'then will I profess unto them, I never knew you'. I never knew you, because you never knew Me, because you never manifested Me in the life that you lived. As I manifested My Father, you were to manifest Me, and you never did. CHRIST IN YOU, the hope of glory. The extent to which we manifest Christ in our lives, is the extent to which we can hope to participate in His glory. If we are not manifesting Him, if He is not springing up inside of us, by the springing up of His words, and all of the Word, then we have no hope. I NEVER KNEW YOU, therefore, 'whosoever heareth these words of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man' (same word as the wise servant; same word of the wise virgins). 'He is a wise man that buildeth his house' (what's the house? The ecclesia) 'A wise man which built his ecclesia upon a rock' (what's the rock? Christ's words, God's words, an ecclesia that's built and founded upon a rock. That's what He's talking about). The man that listens and does what I ask him to, is a man that built his ecclesia on a firm foundation, because he is building it on what I have said, what My Father has said. A wise man which builds his house upon a rock; does that mean that his ecclesia is not going to have troubles? 'And the

rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the Rock'. It was founded upon the Rock, Christ, Yahweh, their principles. That's what we have to do, brethren. Our job is to found our ecclesias upon the rock solid foundation of Christ's words, of Yahweh's words, of the principles of the truth that we have held as Christadelphians for a 150 years plus, and that are now being assailed more than they have ever been in this history.

'And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not', (the brother who does not take the time to develop Christ's principles in the life of the ecclesia; who doesn't develop these things in his life, for whom the Word is an option. It's optional whether he's in it or not, or studying it or not; for that man) 'he shall be likened unto a foolish man' (same word as for the foolish virgins) 'which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it'. If your ecclesia is built on controversy, if your ecclesia is founded upon what people call today 'open-minded freedom of speech', and the desire to talk about every issue under the sun, no matter how awfully corrupt it is and its effects on our doctrines, then your ecclesia is built on sand. Brethren talk about freedom of speech, what they are looking for is the opportunity to say whatever they want no matter what anyone feels, because they feel that in teaching in that way, they are keeping the ecclesia open-minded, so that the ecclesia doesn't become like the Jehovah Witnesses. But, they never give the ecclesia the opportunity to consider the purity of the truth, itself. For them, well, that's all rules and regulations and restrictions that hampers them; it hog-ties them so that they feel that they cannot be creative in their thinking. That's not true! The truth that we believe does allow for creativity within the boundaries of reason, and what is healthy, to go beyond that is to cease to feed the ecclesia. It's to become a servant whose derelict in his duty; to go beyond that is to cease to replenish our lamps with oil, because then we're not interested in the oil, we're interested in everything else. The word, itself, is not of interest to us. How we filter it through our fleshly filtration system is what now becomes important, so my little ways of looking at prophecy or looking at this or that issue, well, that becomes the most important thing in the world to me, so it must be to the ecclesia, because I have lost track of the fact that I only care about my way of thinking. I don't care about the effect it's having on my ecclesia. The greatest tragedy of our day is that many of the people who do this, our arranging brethren, they have the status of virgins; they are the ones who are servants over the household, and if that's the kind of ecclesial life that you're building; you're building your ecclesia on sand, and when the storms come (you notice exactly the same problems assail both kinds of ecclesias). All ecclesias go through problems, we have to. If there are no problems for us to go through in our ecclesial living, we shall not ever look forward to the kingdom or we shall not ever develop the skill of nurturing, teaching, building and nourishing within, that we will have to carry through to the kingdom. So, we need trouble; trouble makes us men and women of faith.

Same problems assail both; in one case, even after all the trouble comes, the ecclesia falls not, because in the final analysis it is founded on THE ROCK of Christ's and God's words; the other one, well, the other one is founded on human expediency; what seems

to be logical at the time. You do this in response to that and every year, at the end of the year, what you have made is a dozen decisions that were based and that were narrow in their focus, based really on the specific event without the wider perspective of its impact on, and the influence on it of the truth. So, we run that very real risk, we face that grave danger today, brethren.

Matthew 25:13 the Lord said, 'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh'. That word brethren means, the word 'watch', keep awake. Wake up brethren, wake up to your responsibilities. It means 'be alert', be alert to what is going on, in you and around you in the ecclesia. Be vigilant; look for the health of your ecclesia; be vigilant for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The whole that we have looked at, all of these messages, they are messages about READINESS. Being prepared. Ecclesial servants have got to be found when Christ returns, feeding their fellow servants as the needs arise. It's a process that's continuous; it's never past tense, it's never over and done with. They're feeding, they're preparing, and the walk that they are walking, must all be firmly rooted in the Word. The Word is what has to be their source of continual light. Now, whatever happens with the board in the ecclesia, is going to happen with the ecclesia. And you always choose the board that you deserve, because you choose the people that you want to have, looking after the business and the needs of the ecclesia. If the arranging brethren treat the truth and the life and their responsibility to the ecclesia, as a part-time thing, then that is going to be the attitude of the ecclesia. They will have already have founded it on sand. But, if on the other hand our lives, our ecclesial decision making process, the lives of our brethren and sisters, are always, always, always taken back to the Word, back to the Word. Then with all the problems that we are going to face, and they will get worse, we shall not fall and we shall be found watching and waiting when He returns, if we want to watch and if we want to wake up.