



"Why does no one confess his sins? Because he is yet in them. It is for a man who has awoke from sleep to tell his dreams."
—Seneca

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Do You Have Enough Oil? (Part One)

[Matthew 25:1-13](#) contains the well-known [Parable of the Ten Virgins](#), an instruction brimming with end-time relevance:

Then the [kingdom of heaven](#) shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for

you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

In this parable, the presence of oil is the critical factor in determining which of these maidens were wise and which were foolish. More than just an accolade, their wisdom—or lack thereof—determined which were prepared to go to the wedding and which were not.

What does the oil represent in this parable? It is commonly held that oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, but what verses does one use to support that? Water is a clear symbol of the Holy Spirit, as are fire and wind, and we can point to unambiguous scriptures to show that symbolism. But, believe it or not, it is not nearly so simple with oil.

The closest examples are the few that link *anointing* and the Holy Spirit, and oil is used in anointing (for example, [Luke 4:18](#)). Even then, the linkage is not absolute, because in most places in Scripture where the Holy Spirit is given, such as at [baptism](#), it is through the laying on of hands without any oil being used. In addition, there are numerous examples of anointing where the Holy Spirit is not given as an indwelling essence, such as [God](#) calling Cyrus the Great "His anointed" ([Isaiah 45:1](#)), or [Jesus](#) instructing people to anoint their head while fasting ([Matthew 6:17](#)). Even though we may take it for granted that oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, when it comes down to showing that scripturally, it is more challenging than one might think.

This is not to say that oil is *not* a symbol of the Holy Spirit, but rather that the Holy Spirit is only a portion of what oil represents in the Bible. But if the Holy Spirit is all we think of when we read about oil, we will miss out on a great deal of meaning and significance.

In this parable, we see that the foolish virgins are instructed to go *buy* oil, and likewise other unnamed persons are *selling* oil. Commerce lies behind the possession of oil here. But questions arise if we simply substitute the Holy Spirit for the oil. In the story of Simon the sorcerer in [Acts 8:9-24](#), Simon actually tried to do this—he tried buy the Holy Spirit, and he assumed that Peter would sell it to him. That did not work out, of course, as Peter's response in verse 20 emphasizes: "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!" This

translation is quite mild compared to what the Greek indicates Peter's righteous indignation to Simon implies, "You and your money can go to destruction"—or, in other words, to [hell](#). That is what the leader of the apostles thought about somebody trying to buy the Holy Spirit!

In addition, the Holy Spirit is called the *gift* of God in several places ([Acts 2:38](#); [8:20](#); [10:45](#); [I Timothy 4:14](#); [II Timothy 1:6](#); [Hebrews 6:4](#)). Only a con-artist would try to convince us to purchase something that is given as a gift! These things beg the question of what exactly the oil in the parable represents, and how we can have enough to be wise and prepared when the Bridegroom returns.

To understand more fully what oil represents, it is helpful to go to the very first mention of it in the Bible. It is first found on the occasion of Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching to heaven:

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. ([Genesis 28:16-18](#))

Here it says that Jacob poured oil on the stone, but a few chapters later when God is reminding Jacob of this event, God says that Jacob *anointed* the pillar ([Genesis 31:13](#)). This incident is where both oil and anointing are first mentioned. *Anointing* literally means "to daub" or "to smear," which is what Jacob did to the stone with his oil.

Incidentally, the next time God met with Jacob in Bethel, Jacob did this again—he poured oil on a stone. Does it not seem odd that after this awesome dream, the first thing Jacob does is pour oil on this rock that he was using for a pillow? But when we understand the importance of oil, we will see how it fits.

Next time we will see just how broad the symbol of oil is and what it means for us.

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Prayer and Seeking God](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

We must not have an apathetic relationship toward God (Revelation 3:15), but instead to ardently, earnestly, diligently, and fervently seek God in order to imitate His behavior in our lives. The fervency of a passionate courtship and marriage relationship provides the grounds for comparison of the kind of relationship God wants with us. Jesus, David, and Jacob exemplified the passionate fervor and heat (both to purify good and to destroy evil) God demands of us. If we search for God with all our hearts, looking for something which is a vital necessity for us (Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Hebrews 11:6) God will reward us, giving us what we are seeking: a warm, ardent relationship, transforming us into what He is.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Parable of the Ten Virgins \(Part Two\)](#)

by Martin G. Collins

The Parable of the Ten Virgins is without doubt prophetic concerning the attitude of Christians at the end time. Martin Collins discusses the differences between the wise and foolish virgins, drawing out principles we can apply to our Christian walk.

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