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## ***THE PRINCIPAL SIGN OF HIS COMING***

**In Leviticus 23:1-5, we read the following words**

<sup>1</sup>And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feast of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations; even these are my feasts. <sup>3</sup>Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall not servile any work therein; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. <sup>4</sup>These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their season. <sup>5</sup>In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover.

**These words introduce us to the seven feasts of the Lord. We are told in verse 2 and again in verse 4, that these feasts are feasts of the Lord. He calls them my feasts", but he says they are for a holy convocation. They relate to God's people and so those ones must be gathered unto the Lord**

**The seven feasts set out experiences in redemption, (each founded on the other before it) that God had prepared for his people in Christ Jesus. It is important to know what God wants to do in this final hour in order that we might be able to understand where we have reached in the Lord's programme. God is a God of purpose. The Bible says *known to God from the foundations of the world are all his works*. God lays out a plan and then he goes ahead to execute it. Whatsoever he does, is in harmony with what he has set forth at the beginning.**

**Perfect wisdom mapped out this plan; perfect power will realise it. There is nothing to alter in God's plan of redemption. There is nothing too high or holy that he cannot accomplish. God cannot settle for a second best or abandon his project of redemption midstream because He lacks the power or resources to bring it about. Whatever is taught in the New Testament as belonging to the inheritance of the saints is something that can be realised by submitting to the working of his power.**

**So, no matter how high and holy, no matter how exalted is the position to which the church is called, God will not settle for anything less. He has the power to realise his purpose in a willing and obedient people. Isaiah 1:9 says *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land*.**

Here in Leviticus 23, we are introduced to God's plan for His people. The book of Leviticus has this important characteristic, that it is wholly revelational. The contents, from the first to the last verse of the book are directly revealed from God to Moses. In the books of Genesis, Numbers and Deuteronomy, quite a number of the chapters take the form of historical record, but in the book of Leviticus, the God that has chosen to come and dwell among his people, lets them know how they are to approach Him. So, the book of Leviticus is wholly revelational.

In Leviticus 23, we find that there are seven feasts of the Lord. These seven feasts are grouped into three categories. We have the feast of Passover with two other feasts included in the celebration (the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of the waving of the sheaves or First-fruits). Then we have the feast of Pentecost. And then the third is the feast of tabernacle or Ingathering. This third feast (the feast of Tabernacle) like the first (the feast of Passover) has two additional feasts included in its celebration: the feast of trumpets and the feast of atonement.

We are told that each of these feasts is to be celebrated in its season. We are also shown that when the season comes for each feast to be celebrated there is to be a proclamation, a blowing of the trumpet and a holy convocation unto the LORD.

We have observed earlier that feasts in the Old Testament are shadows of the redemption that is in Christ. The Old Testament writings, ceremonies and worship are but shadows of good things to come, which good things came through Jesus Christ (Colossians 2: 17); Hebrew 10:1). Thus, we should expect that these feasts have their antitypical fulfilment in us individually and collectively.

From the divine standpoint, the feast of Passover answers to the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross sourcing our redemption. He is the Passover lamb that took away the sin of the world. In the feast of unleavened bread, we see the holiness of life that Jesus manifested throughout the thirty-three and a half years of his humanity. Then, in the waving of the sheaves (otherwise called the firstfruits), we are shown his resurrection from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:20 says *but now is Christ risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of them that slept*. We are told in Roman 1:4 that He was declared to be the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness and by the resurrection from the dead.

The feast of Pentecost, from the divine standpoint, symbolises the coming of the Lord unto His people in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the exalted Christ coming to indwell His people and working redemption from inside of them is the substance of the feast of Pentecost. Then in the feast of Tabernacles, Christ clothed with the glory and honour of the Father in His throne shall come to bring those who eagerly wait for him into the same estate of life. So, we see in Christ the fulfilment of these feasts.

For the believers the feasts show the program of God for him in redemption. The church is to journey from one experience of rest and glory in Christ to another (a higher) experience, ever onward, until she comes into fullness of redemption. She is to experience Christ in Passover with its two associated feasts. She is also to experience Him in Pentecost. And finally, she is to experience Christ in Tabernacles (with its two associated feasts).

For the church, the feast of Passover has been in fulfilment since Calvary. In 1 Corinthians 5:7, we are told that *Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us*. We are commanded to *keep the feast not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*. When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and experiences the new birth, he can be said to be celebrating the feast of Passover. He has passed from death unto life (John 5:24). Of course in that same encounter, the power of sin over the soul is broken and the capacity is installed within the believer to live in newness (holiness) of life. The person experiences a raising up from the dead, as it is written in Ephesians 2:1-6 we *hath he*

*quicken*ed who was dead in trespasses and sin... and has raised us up together with Christ (by grace are ye saved, and he begins to live as one that is alive from the dead (Romans 6:13)

Thus, at the point of salvation, the believer is brought into the reality of the feast of Passover with the two associated feasts of unleavened bread and firstfruits; and he is called upon to continue in that experience. He is to keep the feast (living in the reality of the Passover; living as one that has been raised from the dead) not with old leaven (the old man), neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. So, for the church individually and collectively, the feast of Passover is already an experience fulfilled.

The same is true of the feast of Pentecost. We are told in Acts 2:1 that *when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* The baptism with the Holy Spirit opens the door for the celebration of the feast of Pentecost.

By the experience of Pentecost, we are introduced into the supernatural character of the Kingdom. We are clothed with power, brought into a sphere where we can manifest dominion over the forces of darkness and over sickness and diseases. In Pentecost, we receive the power for victorious Christian living and are made able to serve the Lord in the power of the Spirit.

The coming of the Lord to the church in His power in these two feasts and in related teachings is in scriptures called the early rain; and all that may be experienced by the church under the rain answers to the earnest of our inheritance or the firstfruits of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:5, Romans 8:23). The phrase "the earnest of our inheritance" suggests that there are things in our redemption beyond these two feasts. There is a fullness that is yet to be entered into by any of the church class.

In the same way, the phrase "the firstfruits of the Spirit" indicates that there are riches in the Spirit life reserved by God for His own. Hebrews 4:9 says, *there remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.* The glories of the life lived in "the fullness of the spirit" fulfil the feast of "Rest". We are told that there is a labour required of the church to enter into this fullness of rest (verse 11 of Hebrews 4). Howbeit, it is not going to be a labour in the flesh, but brought about by divine help.

The third feast celebrated completes the work of redemption in us. It is the fullness realm. With it, the church age is wound up. The perfected church is then unveiled as the Kingdom of heaven. This introduces the millennium reign of Christ.

There are times and seasons with God. The season must set in for a specific purpose of God in redemption to be realised. The very words we find in Acts 2:1 confirm this. It was when the day of Pentecost was fully come that the Holy Spirit was outpoured upon the church. Also, in Galatians 4, we are shown that it was when the fullness of time came, that God sent this son into the world as the Passover Lamb.

The feast of Tabernacles shall be celebrated in three parts. The first is the feast of trumpets, a memorial of the blowing of trumpets (Leviticus 23:24). Typically, this takes place on the first day of the seventh month (the last month in the religious calendar of Israel). Antotypically, we may separate between the ministry of the Word announcing the season and the emergence of Kingdom prophets of the order of Revelations 11:34. Their ministry will be revealed as the actual fulfilment, as the actual celebration of the feast of trumpets.

The second is the feast of atonement, which takes place on the tenth day of the seventh month. This is followed by the feast of Tabernacles itself, which, takes place for eight days, from the fifteenth day of the month. The time of the Tabernacles is a time of great rejoicing; a time of great ingathering. The seventh month actually coincides with the time of the latter rain, when the people gather in the full harvest of their land.

The feast of atonement speaks prophetically of our attaining to full moral and spiritual resurrection. The feast of Tabernacles antitypically, points to the promise of the redemption of the believer's body from corruption. Thus, there are two great experiences associated with the fullness of our inheritance, which are to be fulfilled by Christ in the church at the time of the end. The first is the atonement: the experience of moral perfection, full deliverance from sin and its effects. The second is the redemption of the body. According to Romans 8:23, it is the redemption of the body that will signal our adoption as full-grown sons of God.

Our objective in this message is to state clearly that the antitypical celebration of the feast of trumpets precedes the experiences of perfection and glorification. In fact, the trumpet ministry is required to produce the atonement transformation. Whenever the Second Advent is discussed in the New Testament, reference is made to the blowing of trumpets.

The Parousia of Christ cannot be separated from agencies released to the church to secure its purpose. The presence of these agencies is sufficient evidence that the promise has set in. The "trumpet ministries and the Spiritual movement birthed by it are signs in the heavens of the Parousia of Christ.

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# *THE PRINCIPAL SIGN OF HIS COMING*

In the last edition, using the symbolism of the feast, we were introduced into the programme of God for the church. We saw that there are three great experiences in redemption that God has prepared for the church. It was observed that while the first two feasts are associated with the coming of the Lord enabling us to reap the firstfruits of the Spirit, the third feast is associated with the coming of the Lord to bless us with the fullness of our inheritance.

We also saw that it is in the closing period of the church age, the time of the Second Advent of Christ that the church is to enter into the antitypical fulfilment of the feast of Tabernacles. Then we went ahead to show that the particular feast that announces the season of the Tabernacles is the feast of trumpets. It is for this reason that we are shown in the scriptures that the coming of the Lord in his Second Advent is to be accomplished by the blowing of the trumpets. The

following are scriptural references to buttress this: 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Matthew 24:30-31; Revelations 8:2-6; 10:7; 11:5, 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.

With this introductory summary, let us get into our subject: The *Principal Sign of His Coming*. We are looking at the principal sign of the Lord's "Parousia" in the context of the parable of the 10 virgins (Matthew 25:1-13). The principal sign itself is given in Matthew 24:30-31, but we might not be able to get full entrance into this thought except we first consider the question asked by the disciples and the answer the Lord gave. The question itself is in three parts. Matthew 24:2 reads:

<sup>2</sup>And Jesus said unto them, see not all these things, verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

The reference is to the Old Testament temple. The disciples had mentioned in verse 1 how magnificent the temple was, drawing the attention of Jesus to the architectural beauty; but Jesus taking advantage of the situation speaks prophetically into the situation of Israel telling them what shall be.

There was to come a grievous tribulation upon the nation. The effect of the tribulation was to last almost two thousand years; from AD 70 when the Roman armies came against Jerusalem, destroyed the temple and the city, and carried the remnant captive into all the nations of the earth. We are told in the Luke account that the captivity and indignation was to last until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

Now when the Lord spoke in the above scriptures, (Matthew 24:2) concerning the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem, the disciples assumed that this terrible thing that was to happen to Israel would coincide with the end of the World. Though Jesus answered their question as to when these things shall be, he also spoke of the time of the end.

So, let us read verse 3 of Matthew 24 as we consider the three-fold question of the disciples. Matthew 24:3

<sup>3</sup>And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately saying tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?.

They desired to know of the Lord when the temple shall be destroyed. They also wanted to know what would be the sign of the coming of the Lord; and since they knew that the coming of the Lord would bring an end to this present world (this present age), they asked again what shall be the sign of the end of the age.

"What shall be the sign of thy coming?" That is our present focus. We are looking at the principal sign of the Lord's coming. In other words, we are looking at the prophecies of Matthew 24 in the light of the last two questions of the disciples: what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age? Now we come quickly to verses 29-31 of Matthew 24 where these questions are answered.

<sup>29</sup>Immediately after the tribulations of those days...

The reference is to the tribulation that was to come upon the nation of Israel, tribulations of such dimensions that have never been seen in the history of that nation. We are shown here that the ending period of that captivity will coincide with the time of the Second Coming of the Lord. It will be a time of returning favour back to Israel and of judging the nations, bringing a time of trouble and distress upon the nations of the earth.

In our meditation on "Understanding the times", we saw that Jerusalem was to be trampled underfoot of the nations until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled. So, all of these things: the fulfilment of the times of the gentiles, the restoration of the Jews back to their land and the return of favour to that nation, the beginning of the time of troubles for the nations etc, are all associated with the Second Advent of Christ. We will read verse 29 again, and continue the reading straight to verse 31.

<sup>29</sup>Immediately after the tribulations of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: <sup>30</sup>And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven: And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn. And they shall see the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup>And he shall send his angels with a great sound of the trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

So, here is given us the sign (not signs but sign, showing that it is the principal sign) of the Lord's coming. This sign is said to appear in heaven. The heaven here is not the sky. In verse 29 for instance, we are told that "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken". Of course, this is not speaking of the physical sun, moon, stars, etc. Even though things do appear now and then in relation to these heavenly bodies, the heaven referred to here in verse 29 has to do with the church world and the religious heaven.

There is a whole lot going on in the unseen realms. The result is that there so much distress among men. Luke 21:26 says *men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things, which are coming upon the earth.*

Also, the heavens referred to in verse 30 where the principal sign of His coming is to appear is not the sky, but the normal sphere of the church. It is the church that is the heaven in reference here. Ephesians 2:6 says, *we are sitted with Christ in heavenly places* even though we are physically present on earth. It is from that spiritual height that the church conducts her affairs.

The sign of the Lord's coming, the principal sign, is to appear in heaven among the Lord's people. It is to be seen only by those who have known Jesus Christ in salvation, especially those walking in faithfulness towards the Lord. It is a sign to be seen by heaven dwellers. Philippians 3:20 says, *for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the saviour the Lord Jesus Christ ... Revelations 12:12 says, therefore, rejoice ye heavens; and ye that dwell in them...*

So, the heaven is a people, or put differently, heaven is the sphere of spiritual activities and fellowship of the Lord's people. This sign, the principal sign of the Lord's coming, is to appear in heaven. It is a sign to be read among the Lord's people. The world of men will not be able to discern it, for this aspect of the sign is not expected to be understood by them. The sign is addressed to the church of Jesus Christ with a view to preparing her to receive the coming of the Lord.

In verse 31, there is something to note with the appearing of this sign. Remember that we have already shown that associated with the coming of the Lord is blowing of trumpets. With this at the back of our minds, we can now read verse 31 of Matthew 24. It says

<sup>31</sup>And he shall send his angels with a great sound of the trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other

Just like it was observed earlier, the word "angels" here refers to human messengers, the angels of the churches (Revelations 1:20), human persons suitable anointed by the Holy Spirit and given grace by the Spirit of prophecy to go forth with a ministry to the Lord's people concerning the second coming of the Lord.

The trumpet speaks of the ministry of the word. Not just any ministry of the word, but that which has to do with the ministry of Christ in the church at the time of the end. It is the sound of the trumpet that goes forth when men speak concerning the seasons that they are in. So, not all teachings, not all the anointed teachings can be said to be the sound of the trumpet, but that, which relates to the current season.

Here, we are told that it is "a great sound of a trumpet", implying two things. One: it comes with great clarity, great power and great anointing. Secondly, it is the greatest message to be given to the church, since it directs her attention to the final aspects of the work of redemption.

Then next, we are told that the focus of the ministry of these angels of God as they go forth with the great sound of the trumpet will be to gather the elect. That which is gathered is the elect, not just a gathering of persons. Here again, the activity is restricted to the church, people foreknown of God as belonging to Him in a special way, men and women that have been chosen to have a special place in the body of Christ from the foundations of the world. They are elects; they are such before the ministry reaches them.

Again, it is implied that the gathering of the elect, will be a world-wide phenomenon. It says from one end of the heavens to the other. Across the church world, in all the nations of the earth, this activity of gathering the elect will be taking place.

At the time of the coming of the Lord, His Parousia, there is to be a gathering together of the saints unto Him (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Luke 17:23 says *where the soma (the body of truth enlightening God's people as to the fullness of their inheritance) is, there will the eagles be gathered together*. In Psalm 50:1-5, we are told that at the time when the Lord shall call to the heavens from above and the earth that He may judge His people, there is to be a gathering together of the saints unto him, them that have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

The effect of this gathering out of the church world of the eagle saints is the birthing of a spiritual movement. This will be very different from the many spiritual movements that have sprung up through the church history because it will not have human heads (it will not be something of a denomination). It will be a phenomenon emerging all over the world. All over the world, on account of the sound of the trumpet, believers will become increasingly concerned about the season that has set in, seeking to be fully joined to the Lord.

In Matthew 24:23-26 and Luke 17:37 it is shown that this gathering of the saints at the end of the church age shall not be unto a man or to some men who claim to have been specially anointed of God. But the gathering shall be unto the Lord Himself as shown in Psalm 50:5. The light of the truth of the kingdom, which the Lord comes to reveal to His people, shall be the basis of the

gathering. At that time, the Lord, not men, not signs and miracles in themselves, becomes the central focus of His people. Full union with Him in His glory becomes their sole desire.

The direct result of "the sound of a great trumpet" is the emergence of a spiritual movement all over the world. a great gathering of the Lord's people, of those whose hearts and minds are responding to the Spiritual awakening.

The world however will not be aware of this great work of the Lord among His people. With time, more and more believers will come to know about it. Matthew 24:27 says *for as the lightning (or rather sun) cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west: so shall also the Parousia of the Son of man be.* The reference is to the light of the prophetic word shinning into the hearts of the Lord's people (2 Peter 1:19).

So, it may begin in small degree but this sign is to ultimately overtake the church world. The light of His presence is to cover all the ends of the heaven, the church.

That introduces us to Matthew 25:1. Notice that this particular discourse begins in Matthew 24; so, it is one continuous teaching we have in Matthew 24 and 25; the chapter division being merely for our convenience. What we find in Matthew 25 are things that take place at the end of the age, at the time of the Lord's Parousia among His people.

There are two distinct prophetic views of the kingdom of heaven during the gospel age, her time of preparation. Christ kingdom now, the church, has a preview of her history given us in several parables: the seven parables of Matthew 13; the parable of the marriage feast of the Matthew 22 show several features of the church's history; but Prophecy gives the time of the end special attention. In the parable of Matthew 25:1-13, prophecy opens to us a special feature of the church at the time of the end.

The introduction of Matthew 25:1 confirms this. It says "*Then shall the kingdom of heaven become like unto...*" The word "then" means "AT THAT TIME". And we may ask, "at what time"? at the time when the things shown in Matthew 24:29-51 will be taking place. At the time when the principal sign of His coming shall have appeared in the heaven of the church. At the time when the Lord's Parousia would have set in and the Lord would have began to judge between His servants. At this time also he gives the faithful among His servants symbolic trumpets and these ones would go forth declaring the message of the coming kingdom. Yes, at the time when many of God's servants (the unfaithful) will be smiting their fellow servants (the faithful) and drinking with the drunkards, priding themselves in things which the Lord does not approve of ...*THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

So, there is a spiritual movement that is birthed in the church on account of the great sound of a trumpet announcing the coming of the Lord. And this agrees with what we find in Number 10. The trumpet is for the calling of God's people out of their various religious camps, unto the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

The persons involved in this spiritual journey are the elects. In Matthew 25, they are said to be virgins. This is because they are believers who proved their love for the Lord and their allegiance to him alone by responding to His call (Revelation 14:4). In the midst of the decay in the church world, its falling standards and idolatry, these ones have separated their hearts to love and serve Him rather than serve men. Their desires are towards the Lord alone, they long to be united with Him.

Secondly, we are told that these virgins WENT OUT, for so it is rendered in many other translations. And we ask, out of where? Out of the Spiritual environment of the denominational



church systems. When the kingdom of heaven is to be perfected and installed the earth, and all other kingdoms are to be destroyed, the Lord's people who love the Lord are called upon to break loose from the counterfeit kingdom of the denominational church systems. They are to break free from the shackles of denominationalism.

The bible says from the days of John the Baptist until now, the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven has the effect of loosening men from their familiar religious environments and setting them on course to lay hold on the kingdom indeed. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and it is by violence, by breaking free from human religious systems and laying hold upon the upward calling of God in Christ, that men take the kingdom unto themselves. This is very important.

They are also said to take their lamps as they proceed on the Spiritual journey to meet with the bridegroom. In Psalm 119:105, we are told *thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path*. In Proverbs 6:23, we are shown that *the commandment is a lamp, the Law is light, the light thereof are the ways of life*. Then in 2 Peter 1:19, the prophetic word concerning the coming of the Lord is shown to be a light (a lamp) that shines in dark places.

Thus, lamp, in a general sense, typified the light of God's word in its capacity to lead God's people into the revelation of His mind for them at a given time. And when we read Matthew 25:1 in the light of what we find in Matthew 24:31 regarding the proclamation of the great message of Christ's coming, we find that the lamp stand for the prophetic word; the full range of prophetic teaching that enlightens the mind and heart as to the coming of the Lord, and its purpose. Full salvation comes with this coming of the Lord.

Thus, the ten virgins are person who have been prophetically quickened to realise that the coming of the Lord is near and have began to devote their hearts and minds in seeking the salvation that is ready to be revealed at the last time (1 Peter 1:5).

Thus, there is to be a gathering of all of the Lord's people unto the present truth (2 Peter 1:12) Those who have been spiritually quickened to appreciate the present day ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would come out of the visible church systems neck deep in personality cults They come to true worship of God. *God is a spirit, and they that worship him shall worship him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him* (John 4:24). We become like whom we worship.

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### *THE PRINCIPAL*

### *SIGN OF HIS*

### *COMING*

In the last edition, we saw that associated with the Lord's Parousia is the emergence of a spiritual movement. They are a body of people, breaking loose from every barrier, seeking full union with Christ. Matthew 25:1 says *THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*

The spiritual movement is a direct consequence (result) of the "great sound of a trumpet" as detailed in Matthew 24:31, *and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* It is the great sound of trumpet that indicates that the Lord in His Parousia has commissioned faithful messengers with the task of announcing the time of fulfilment for the antitypical feast of the tabernacles.

Now, we are told that the ten virgins go to meet the Bridegroom. Then in verse 6, we are told that the Bridegroom comes to meet the bride. Of course, this is clear because it is the message of the coming of the bridegroom, "the great sound of a trumpet" that occasioned in them a deep longing to move out of their familiar spiritual environments on a journey to meet the Bridegroom.

Thus, there is the journey of the bride to meet the bridegroom and there is the journey of the bridegroom to meet the Bride. The two journeys are interdependent. It is as the Lord comes that the ten virgins receive inspiration to go to meet Him. When in the experience of the ten virgins they do not see His coming, then, they slumber and sleep. They are only awakened when their eyes are opened to see that the Lord, the Bridegroom comes. So, we are told in verse 5... *and while the Bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*

The delay of the bridegroom is in respect of certain conditions in his church. He delays to give enough time for the virgins to put to practice and experience what they have already learnt and to give opportunity for others of His people who love and desire him but are still in the environment of the denominational church systems, to be gathered unto Him. So it is that, when the ten virgins do not see the nearness of the Lord and the day of glory approaching, they slumber and sleep.

This slumbering and sleeping does not refer to a cessation of activities. In 1 Thessalonians 5, we are told that slumbering relates to the night. When there is darkness over the prophetic word concerning the coming of the Lord and our uniting with Him in glory, then those justifying works that the believer does in line with the message begin to diminish. Even though he may be busying himself with other good works in the Lord's vineyard, he is said to be asleep in relation to the coming of the Lord.

How then does the Lord come to His people and how do we open up to receiving the blessing of His coming? The Lord comes in two principal ways. First He comes in His word and by His spirit. Then He comes in His person. And when we talk about the coming of the Lord, we must maintain this distinction. There is the coming of the Lord in His person, in His glorified estate, and there is the coming of the Lord in His word and by His spirit.

Of course, the coming of the Lord unto His people by His word and by His spirit is to prepare them to receive his coming personally. When he comes by His Spirit and in His Word to his people, it is relative to a specific mission. We have His coming in the feast of Passover where by a person receives the Lord into his heart is delivered from the penalty of sin and becomes a new creature. Then there is His coming in the feast of Pentecost. He comes by His spirit to indwell the believer in baptismal fullness, opening him up to experience and live the supernatural life of the kingdom. Then He comes to His people in the feast of Tabernacles.

It is the coming of the Lord unto His people in the release of His word and of His spirit in this third dimension that is the subject matter of Matthew 25. He comes first in His word and in His Spirit revealing to them the matter of their full redemption. He leads them into preparations needed to experience that full salvation. Then He comes in the power of His word and His Spirit to deliver completely from the guilt, power and presence of sin.

This is the full yield of the atoning sacrifice of Christ applied to a believing soul. Then He comes again in the power of His word and His Spirit to bring those that have experienced the atonement into incorruptibility and life. This is the ultimate goal in God's multi-stage redemption program.

Thus, in Matthew 25:6, the coming of the Lord referred to is not the personal appearing of the Lord but His coming in the power of His word and Spirit lifting up those of the elect who have been under the sound of the trumpet and have fully profited themselves into the experience of the feast of atonement.

Scattered all over the earth at this time of the end are to be found home churches, local expressions of the body of Christ, where the people meet together under God to seek to know the Lord more intimately; preparation for Christ unveiling in them, being the central theme. They meet to worship God in a free environment where no one is lord over them but the Lord Jesus Christ, where they can receive ministry from one another according to the measure of grace in evidence.

The nuclei concept of the New Testament revelation is the body of Christ. This is the mystery (Ephesians 3). God would have people meeting together in one place with their hearts completely turned to Him, seeking the full unveiling of His saving purpose in their midst. The body of Christ must have a local expression all over the earth and must be constituted in the way God has purposed.

So there is a body that the Lord is bringing unto Himself, all over the earth.. In every place when the trumpet sound is heard, people with virgin heart disposition are gathered to the Lord. They do not concern themselves with meaningless titles but with the title deed of "the Promised Land" – Christ in His fullness.

There are so much of money making schemes in the church today. Many have come into the kingdom at a time when the real character of the kingdom is lost upon the church. They simply enter into the mould of their particular denominations and take on the shape. And so generation after generation, church forms are maintained devoid of life. The average church member today lacks the knowledge of God and does not have a working understanding of the kingdom of God.

A picture of the virgin church, this great sign of the Lord's Parousia, a people clothed with the radiance of the sun of Righteousness is given to us in Revelation 12:1 *And there appeared a great sign (the king James version says "wonder") in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Notice again that the sign is said to appear in heaven.*

It is not our intention in this meditation to go into an examination of this passage. At a time to come, God willing, when we shall take on meditation on the Epiphaneia (the Day of the Revelation of Christ, the Day in which the son of man is revealed), we shall be able to see what happens when this virgin church gives birth to a manchild and the manifestation of the sons of God begins. We shall be able to look at such matters as the tribulation of the outer court class of the kingdom of heaven (those measurably unfaithful), the emergence of the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth, the final overthrow of the kingdom of this world etc, and the place of the overcoming church in all these events.

We move straight to a second thought with which we will be closing. Now, the fact that this body of people going forth in this spiritual movement are said to be "ten virgins" indicates something very important. The number "ten" is often used to represent testing and trials with a view to obtaining perfection in one or more aspects of a man's life (Revelation 2:10). The use of the number is to indicate that the ones being gathered out of the visible church systems are going to be tested and tried by the LORD.

In this connection, we must realise that God judges us as individuals. Although God will make sure that the corporate body is fed and nourished with the word and spirit of God, nevertheless, for our ultimate placement, we are not judged collectively or in groups. Every man appears before the judgement seat of Christ for himself. And this judgement is taking place daily.

One of the things that we have been taught in the church systems is that there is a particular day of judgement in which God sits on a white throne and everyone of us is called upon in turns to give account of himself. The spirit of prophecy and light from the written word teach us that we are daily under the watchful eyes of the great Judge. A man is admitted to more favours with God as he fares well under assessment.

God is not waiting till one final day when He will begin to review what we have done in order to determine what our place in the kingdom shall be. No. What we are to become in the kingdom that is to be revealed is already being determined on daily basis.

Furthermore, we will like to say that from the time of the birth of the church, God's people have been just one body, one class of people moving in the faith of the Son of God. But at the time of the end, four distinct classes appear among the Lord's people. From the standpoint of the Lord, these four classes have always existed, but they become predominantly marked out as to their several characteristics at the time of the end.

First, there would be a class of persons that could be best described as nominal Christians. This class (which is in the majority) consists of persons who have known the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation; have received the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Spirit. Not only are they born again, some have known the Lord in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So nominal Christians are persons who are born again and possibly Spirit Filled, and may even be servants of God.

If this is so, the questions may be asked, in what regard are these persons considered to be nominal Christians? We find the answer in the words of the Lord Himself. In John 8:31, he told the people which believed on him (not unbelievers but those who have already believed on him) *if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.* Again, in John 15:7,8, he told the disciples (persons who had already believed on him), *if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so ye be my disciples.*

Nominal Christians are believers who are not propelled by a deep longing for full union with Christ. These are not looking forward to His appearing and the blessings that come with it. They evidently do not have their conversation in heaven; rather they mind earthly things (Philippians 3:19). They are not looking for the appearing of the Lord to bring them into full redemption. They have settled down for something less than God intends for them. We say again that the vast majority of believers are in this virtual nominal class. It is saddening.

Notice what the Lord said in John 8:31 and 15:8: *if ye continue in my word... if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you... then are ye my disciples indeed*". We must follow on to know the Lord: to learn of Him, to desire to possess more and more of His life and beauty. We do not yet know, as we ought to. Paul says. But a true hunger for righteousness would always be rewarded by an

ever-growing knowledge of the Lord and of the sanctifying and liberating power of truth. The last part of John 8:13 says... *and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.*

So, there is this class of believers, nominal Christians, believers who no longer have a deep desire for the fullness of Christ. Growth in grace has become stunted. These are no longer progressing in God's purpose for apprehending them.

The remaining three classes of believers, which emerge at the time of the end, are found in the parable given in Matthew 25:1-13. They represent people who have responded to the sound of the trumpet calling them to come up hither (Revelation 4:1) to come up higher, to come into full union with Jesus Christ.

There is an unrestrained drive toward earthiness among the majority of God's people today. "Prosperity" teachers seem to be having a field day while the denominational churches are busy arranging meetings on how you can get a house, how you can get a wife, how you can get money, how you can do this and do that, and taking the Lord's people to God's supermarket as it were, showing them the shopping list. The sound of the trumpet is giving a distinct call beckoning on the willing hearted to come up higher.

The high calling of God in Christ Jesus has always been the central theme of the gospel, but in the dark ages, it was lost. We bless God for this hour of great recovery of truth.

So, we understand a second, third and fourth classes of believers as included in the parable of the ten virgins. They have all broken free from the shackles of denominationalism. The parable separates between the foolish virgins and the wise virgins. In other words, of all who hear and hearken to the sound of the trumpet and set their affections on God alone, some along the line let go on the Spirit of consecration. Their folly showing up in that they gradually lose the prophetic spirit: – the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the experiential knowledge of Christ.

We are told in the parable that both the foolish virgins (the second class of believers) and the wise virgins (the third class of believers) slumbered and slept. The prophetic word ministers the approaching day of Christ. Its fervour keeps all awake and working. The absence of light produces opposite effect. So, it is dimness of light that result in the virgins slumbering and eventually going into sleep.

Again, as we observed earlier, "sleeping" does not mean cessation of activity for there is a revival of enthusiasm in the churches world-wide. There has never been a time in which people have been so churchy as this present time. Places that were dead in their orthodoxy are opening the church doors wide for activities morning and evening of each day of the week; and talk about the Pentecostal, the denominations have a living name in the eyes of the world. But the Lord thinks differently. The "virgin" congregation should re-assess themselves every now and then.

Many serious, zealous Christians are deeply asleep in relation to the coming of the Lord, and of the glories that follow.

Now, let's look again at the wise and foolish virgins of Matthew 25. The difference between the two is that the wise virgins had build up a life of consecration, so that when the light began to burn brightly again, they knew how to stir up themselves, break away from all kinds of distractions to focus their attention upon Jesus. But the foolish virgins were gradually drained of this grace through growing weary of the demands of consecration.

For the foolish virgins, to wait upon the Lord and watch, waiting patiently for Him in prayers and fasting, seemed to them a heavy burden. But for the wise ones who were relatively more faithful to

the call to consecration, they were able to pick up from where they left out and began to seek full union with the Bridegroom with greater zeal.

A fourth class of believers, not so explicitly mentioned in Matthew 25, is nevertheless revealed in verse 6. Implicit in Matthew 25:6 is the fact that there is another group of Christians involved in this same spiritual journey outside of the foolish and wise virgins. Matthew 25:6 says *And at midnight, there was a cry made Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him*. Of course, we may ask, who made this cry? The answer comes: they are servants of the Lord who did not go to sleep with the rest of their brethren.

So, we must understand that slumbering and sleeping are not part of the experience that the Lord's people must go through. It is not something arranged or determined by God for the virgins in their journey to meet with the Bridegroom. So long as the light is burning, it is difficult for a man to sleep. The Lord said, "work while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work". Men do not stumble in the day but at night. When the light of God's word is burning brightly touching on the issues that belong to our full inheritance, it is impossible for men to sleep in such an environment.

Thus, the fourth class are those who did not go to sleep with the rest of their brethren. They were constantly in vital contact with the Bridegroom even when He seemed to tarry.

This fourth group can be said to be the just class. Proverbs 4:18 says *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. These ones are faithful above all others. They are accordingly the first of the first-fruit unto God.

Of the four classes of believers we have mentioned, only two (the just class and the wise virgins) are approved to sit with the Lord in His throne at the time when the church age is finally wound up. Only these two classes are judged over-comers and worthy of Christ. The wise virgins were not totally faithful. They had periods of slumbering and sleeping, but because they had built up a life of consecration it was still possible for them to make it to the Bridegroom before "the door was shut".

Thus, it is not enough to be under the voice of the Lord's ministry in His Parousia. It is not enough to hear the sound of the trumpet and come out of the visible church systems and be found in the midst of the body the Lord is raising up today. Each one must make full and faithful use of the opportunity afforded at this period of the Parousia to build up an over-coming life, a life of consecration. The foolish virgins later awakened to the call, but it was rather too late. Throne honours are not forever open. They were shut out.

The foolish virgins do not completely lose out. Even the nominal Christians by virtue of their saving faith have their place in the kingdom of the Lord. They come to a glory less than that of the foolish virgins.

The Lord's purpose for this parable is to destroy in us the tendency towards folly. To come so close to divinity and fail to receive it is a great loss indeed.

And that reminds us of what the Lord told the foolish virgins when they eventually came to the shut door. He said *I know you not*. Now recall that the word "know" here is the same word used in Genesis 3 where it is said, "Adam knew his wife". So it speaks of "intimate relationship with Him". Even though you obeyed the voice of the trumpet and moved out of the denominational church system seeking full union with me, you did not allow your focus to remain firmly fixed on me. You did not retain the habit of seeking me in unbroken fellowship. I do not know you as one that had sustained longing for full union with me. I cannot therefore approve you to be a bride unto me". What a painful loss that is!

**May that not be our portion in Jesus name. May we have a part in one of the two classes that share with Him in His throne. May none that read this material be a cast away. May we all endeavour to make it to the higher and best that God has reserved for those who are heirs of the precious promises of redemption so great. Amen.**