



ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS -  
GRAND THEMES 12 – KINGDOM  
IV

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# WELCOME TO “GRAND THEMES”

Each week we will trace a major theme through the  
whole Bible.



# KINGDOM








# Theme gallery



TEMPLE	COVENANT	COVENANT	COVENANT	COVENANT	EXODUS

# Theme gallery



				
L&D	KINGDOM OT	KINGDOM NT	KINGDOM PARABLES	KINGDOM PARABLES

# The Parable of the Ten Virgins



(Mt 25:1-13) At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish and five were wise.

The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them.

The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.

The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. "At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'" Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps.

# The Parable of the Ten Virgins



The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut."

Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' 'But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' 'Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.'

# The Parable of the Ten Virgins - First look



- What cultural customs do we need to understand?
- What was the practical difference between the wise and foolish women?
- Do you find anything mystifying in this parable?
- What do you think it might be teaching?





# Background – Betrothal & Marriage



- In Jewish culture, betrothal (engagement) was a formal and **binding agreement**, often lasting about a **year** before the actual marriage ceremony. During this period, the **bridegroom prepared a place for the couple to live**, typically at his father's house. The actual marriage ceremony was a significant event, involving a **procession**, a **feast**, and **celebrations** that could last several days.



## Procession of the Bridegroom

- A highlight of the marriage festivities was the bridegroom's procession to the bride's house, usually occurring at **night**. This procession was often a **surprise**, and the bride, along with her attendants (the virgins), had to be ready to meet him. The ten virgins in the parable are likely **bridesmaids** waiting for the bridegroom to arrive and lead them to the wedding feast.

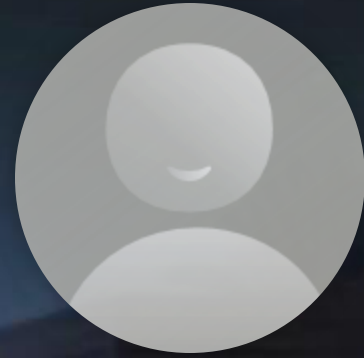


# Lamps and Oil



- The virgins carried lamps or torches to light the way for the bridegroom's nighttime arrival. The oil in their lamps was essential for keeping them lit. Running out of oil meant they would be unprepared and unable to participate in the procession.





# The Marriage Feast

- Once the bridegroom arrived, the procession would go to the marriage feast, typically held at the groom's house. This feast was a major celebration, and being shut out from it implied missing out on a significant communal and joyous event. In the parable, the shut door symbolizes exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven for those unprepared.

# Unpack...



- So, is it a bit clearer now?
- What part of the story has the strongest emotional impact for you?
- Who is selling lamp oil at midnight?
- Why 5+5?
- What do you think Jesus is teaching with this parable? What response is he aiming to produce do you think?
- What has this got to do with the kingdom of heaven?



# Any Scriptural references you can think of?

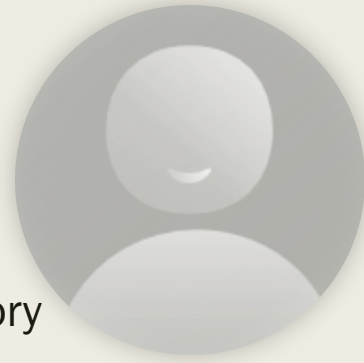


- Wedding in Cana (Jn 2) – shows some cultural background.
- Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Mt 22:1-14). Responding to the invitation, dressed properly, being shut out.
- I will banish from them the **sounds of joy and gladness**, the voices of **bride** and **bridegroom**, the sound of millstones and the **light of the lamp**.(Jer 25:10) – weddings are a time of joy (but will cease soon...
- [Royal bride]... All glorious is the princess within her chamber; her gown is interwoven with gold. In embroidered garments she is led to the king; her **virgin companions** follow her—those brought to be with her. Led in with joy and gladness, they **enter the palace of the king**. (Ps 45:13-15)
- Hear this word, Israel, this lament I take up concerning you:“Fallen is Virgin Israel, never to rise again, deserted in her own land, with no one to lift her up. (Amos 5:1)... sense of a premature death, never got all the way across the marriage threshold.



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
SET  
CONTEXT

# Context - Literary



- Literary context: Where are we in the context of the story being told about Jesus' overall ministry?
- What has come before in the text?
  - *Mt 24 - the day and the hour unknown... therefore keep watch.*
  - *Mt 24:45-51 Parable of the faithful (and **wise**) and wicked servant.*
  - *Taking care of the other servants.*
  - *Diligent in the master's absence.*
  - *Wise!*
  - *Son of man will come at an hour when you do not not expect him. (Mt 24:44)*
- What do you notice about a contrast between the characters in the preceding parable and the characters in this one?



KEEP  
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# Context - Historical



- Cultural/historical context:
- Seems to be talking to the expectations of the people of the day.
- What sort of expectations were there?
- **Why** does this matter? (Master coming soon or not). Was this a thing in the day?
- Who is Jesus' audience here? Is he targeting anyone? (See Mt 22:15 after parable of the wedding banquet)
- What events are coming at that time?
- Jesus' death and apparent victory of Rome/Religious establishment.
- Destruction of Jerusalem, temple, sacrificial system in AD70. Not far away.



# Points of connection



- The Bridegroom?
- The Virgins?
- The Bride?
- The Oil and lamp?
- Midnight?
- The Marriage feast?
- Being shut out?
- Anything else?

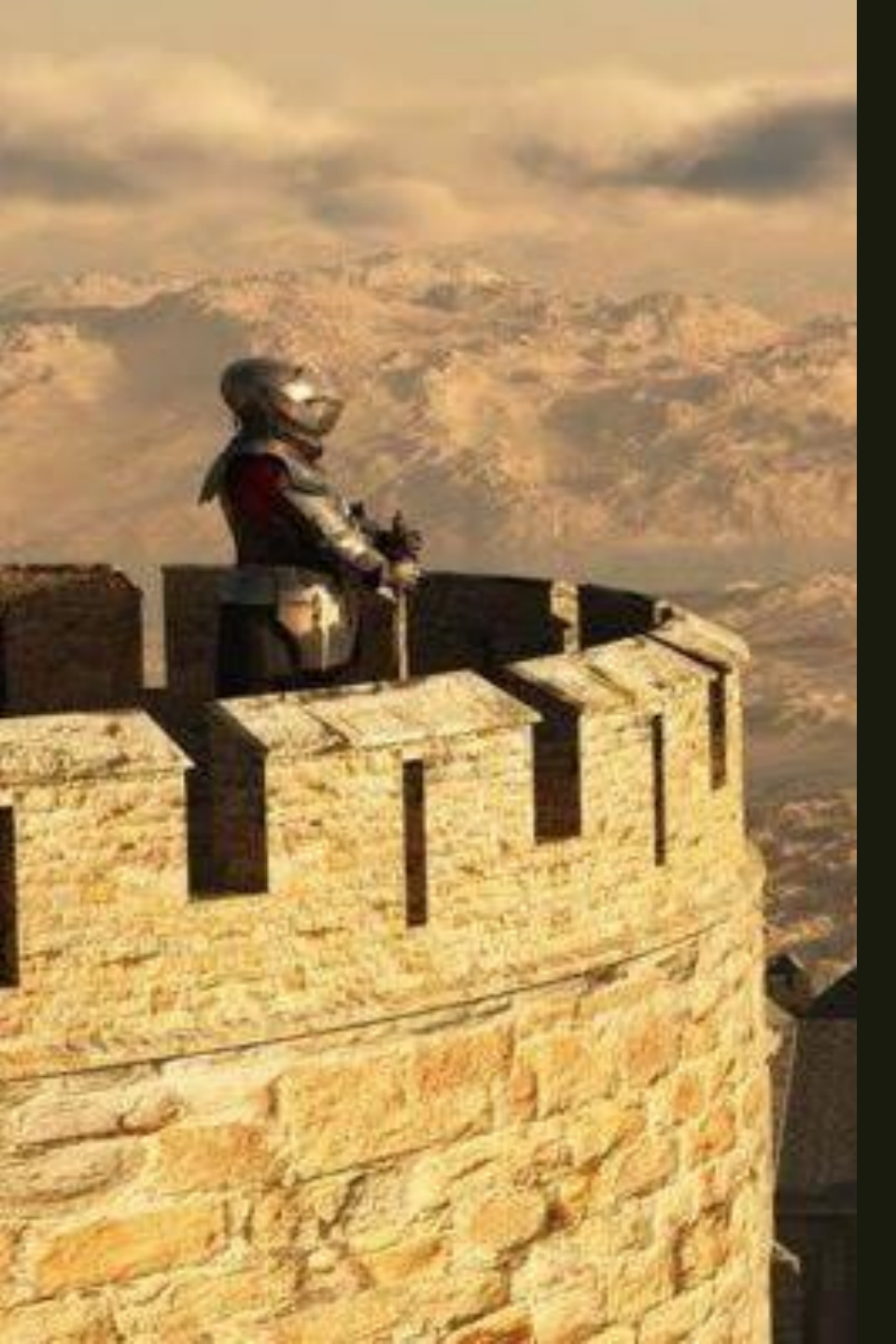


# Possible lessons...



- The coming king is like the bridegroom. You don't know exactly when he is going to turn up, so be ready!
- The coming of the bridegroom gets the real party started!
- Potential shutting out/missing out. There is a judgment made and a door being closed. There is a time when it becomes too late.
- Wisdom and foolishness – what's that?
- Wisdom = Learnable actions that we can take now that lead to better outcomes. Solid framework to make choices on. Observing and Evaluating. Experience. Seeking advice.
- Mt 25:13 – explicit: “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”

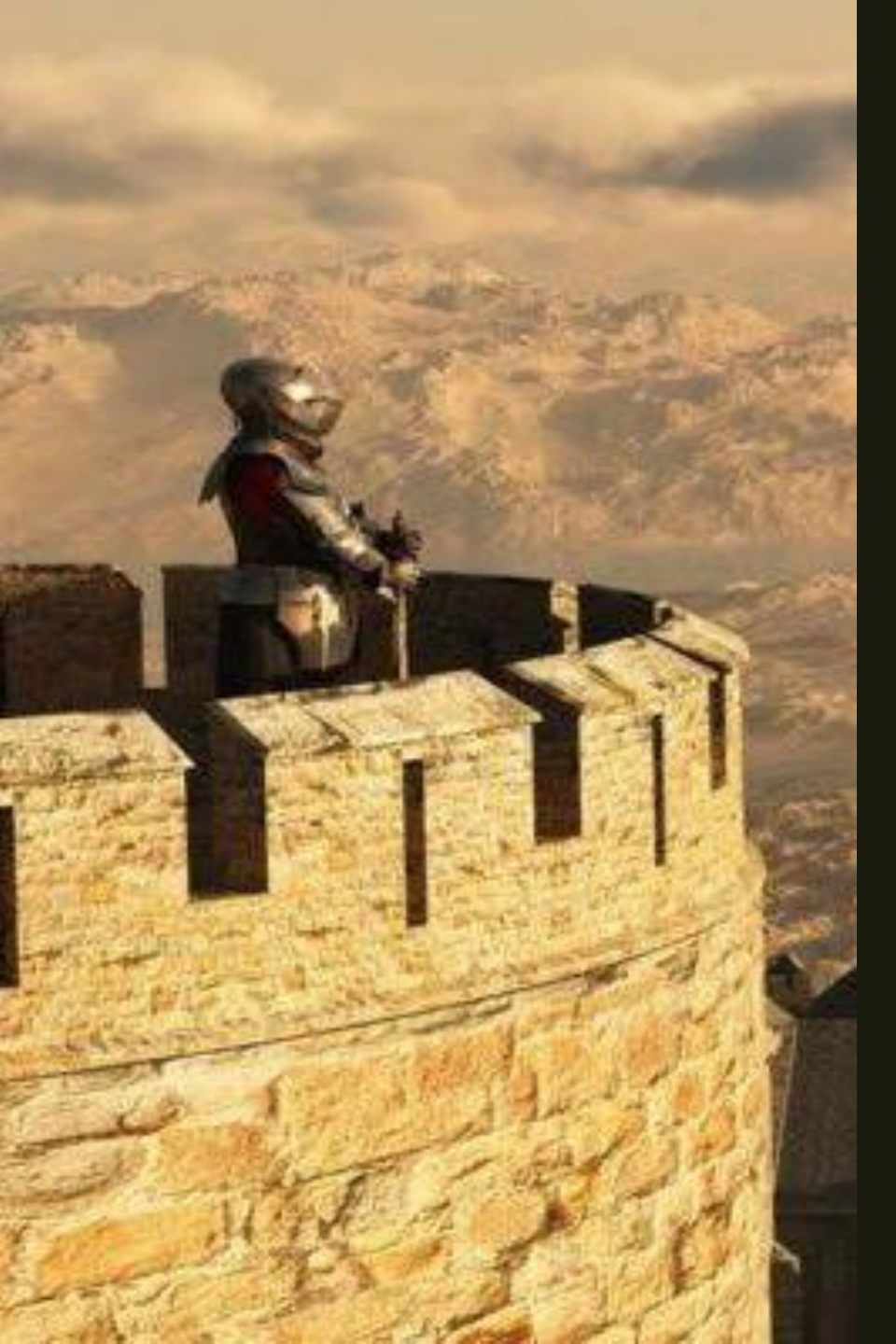




# Watchmen



- Come, all you beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts of the forest! Israel's **watchmen** are blind, they all **lack knowledge**; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they **love to sleep**. They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are **shepherds who lack understanding**; they all turn to their own way, they seek their own gain. "Come," each one cries, "let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better." (Isa 56:9-12)
- A watchman's job is to stay alert through the night for enemies coming to attack the city. Self-denial for the sake of the survival of others.



# Watchmen



- As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a **bridegroom** rejoices over his **bride**, so will your God rejoice over you. I have posted **watchmen** on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, **give yourselves no rest**, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth. (Isa 62:5-7)
- Marriage/bridegroom/bride.
- Attentive watchmen on the walls.
- Possibly a reference to the job that the teachers of Israel **should be doing, but are not!**

# So, what does it mean for us today to “Keep watch”?



- Alertness, paying attention.
- Paying attention to what?
- Being prepared (spare oil). What could that be?
- Keep on evaluating.
- What do we have to do to be like the “foolish virgins”?

# Kingdom

- So, what are we learning about “The Kingdom of Heaven” here?
- What about what it takes to “enter the kingdom”?
- Is “right doctrine” enough? If “yes” then how do we understand these parables?







# Reflection



- What you have you learnt about “Kingdom” from this parable?
- What have you learned about the process of going about interpretation?
- Do you have any personal practical takeaways from this lesson? Things to do/things to avoid.