

Matthew 25:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

Analysis

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them (αἱ μωραὶ λαβοῦσαι τὰς λαμπάδας αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔλαβον μεθ' ἑαυτῶν ἔλαιον, *hai mōrai labousai tas lampadas autōn ouk elabon meth' heautōn elaion*). The foolish virgins possessed lamps (λαμπάδας, *lampadas*—torches or oil lamps used in wedding processions) but lacked additional **oil** (ἔλαιον, *elaion*).

Oil consistently symbolizes the Holy Spirit in Scripture (1 Samuel 16:13, Zechariah 4:1-6, Acts 10:38). The lamps represent visible profession of faith; the oil represents the indwelling Spirit that sustains genuine spiritual life. The foolish had external religion without internal reality—outward form without regenerating grace. Their folly was not ignorance but negligence: they knew to bring lamps but failed to secure adequate oil, suggesting presumption or spiritual carelessness.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish weddings involved a nighttime procession where bridesmaids carried torches to light the bride's way to the groom's house. Wedding festivities could last seven days. The groom's arrival time was often delayed and uncertain, requiring participants to be prepared for waiting.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Do you possess the 'oil' of the Spirit, or merely the 'lamp' of religious profession?
2. What areas of your Christian life reflect presumptive spiritual negligence rather than Spirit-sustained reality?
3. How can you discern whether your faith is self-generated religious activity or Spirit-empowered divine life?

Interlinear Text

αἵτινες	μωραὶ	ἔλαβον	τὰς	λαμπάδας	ἐαυτῶν,	οὐκ
They	that were foolish	and took	G3588	lamps	them	no
G3748	G3474	G2983		G2985	G1438	G3756
ἔλαβον	μεθ'	ἐαυτῶν,	ἔλαιον			
and took	with	them	oil			
G2983	G3326	G1438	G1637			

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 3:5 (Parallel theme): Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Isaiah 58:2 (Parallel theme): Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

Revelation 3:1 (Parallel theme): And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.