

## Grace in Five and the Virgins

### *Prayer*

This morning I would like to talk about Grace. But before we get into that, I want to talk about how difficult it is for some people to study the bible. In many peoples minds it is a history book with limited narratives. In fact, nothing can be further from the truth. As an analysis, I have always found the bible fascinating for many reasons, but one of the fun and revelatory ways I have studied the bible has been through understanding that the bible presents numbers to us in a consistent and meaningful fashion.

How many people know this morning that when we encounter an instance of the number 5 in the bible it always symbolizes, God's grace, goodness and favor toward humans?

How about the fact that it is mentioned 318 times in scripture?

Today to show you how much fun study of the scripture can be, we will be looking at instances of Grace in the scripture as illustrated in the number 5. Sound like fun? Well... it does to me.

Consider that the Ten Commandments consists of two tablets of 5 commandments each Two is significant as well, but if I go down all the possibilities we would be here forever, digging in... humm... tempting...

The first five commandments are related to our treatment and relationship with God  
The Second five concern our relationship with others

God's Grace has established the model for our relationship with each other.

Okay... moving on.

How about the fact that there are five primary types of offerings God commanded Israel to bring to him to receive his grace under the Mosaic Law:

- 1) Burnt – (Lev 1; 8:18-21; 16:24)
- 2) Sin – (Lev 4; 16:3-22)
- 3) Trespass – (Lev 5:14-19; 6:1-7; 7:1-6)
- 4) Grain – (Lev 2)
- 5) Peace – (Lev 3; 7:11-34)

Consider the book of Psalms. It is divided into five major sections as follows:

- 1) Section 1: Psalms (1-41)
  - a. Focus on Passover
  - b. Israel's Beginning
  - c. God's plan of salvation around Christ
- 2) Section 2: Psalms (42-72)
  - a. Sings of a unified Israel
  - b. Pictures the creation of the New Testament Church
- 3) Section 3: Psalms (73-89)
  - a. Sorrow over the destruction of Jerusalem
  - b. Sorrow over the destruction of God's Temple
  - c. Hints at end time Great Tribulation Prophecies
- 4) Section 4: Psalms (90-106)
  - a. Rejoices over the millennial reign of Christ
  - b. Shows the restoration of Israel
- 5) Section 5: Psalms (107-150)
  - a. Creates a picture of when Judah (representing Israel) shall again be delivered

Another Example...

The first five books of the bible are called the books of the law... They are also called the Pentateuch (Penta means five)

How about the fact that John wrote five books centered on the grace of God and eternal life?

How many loaves did Jesus multiply to feed the multitude of 5000? (5)

God directly instructed the people in the construction of the tabernacle...

Have you ever wondered why the temple contained 5 curtains (Exodus 26:3), Five Bars (Exodus 26:26-27), five pillars and five sockets? (Exodus 26:37)

Ever wonder why the altar was five cubits long and five cubits wide? (Exodus 27:1)

Wonder why the height of the court within the tabernacle was five cubits?

Why 5 original priests? Aaron and his four sons

Consider when God was going to destroy Sodom what Abraham did...

He starts his negotiation of grace with God with five fewer righteous people as to suggest that the loss of even 5 righteous people would be of great significance. (Genesis 18:22-23)

Why did David pick up 5 smooth stones to defeat Goliath when he needed only one?

What about the five fold ministry?

Consider Ephesians 4:11-12 - What is the purpose of these five?

To prepare and perfect the saints for ministry, the bible says that some are called to apostles, some to be prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and some teachers. My friends it is through this construct of five outlets that God has ordained that the gospel of Jesus Christ is shared by God's grace.

Are you beginning to see how study of the scriptures is far more than reading historical narratives? Can you see how it can be fun, revelatory and exciting in a challenging way? If you want to see the scriptures in a new way, take a look at the occurrences and meanings of number in scripture.

\*\*\* Here is my segue... we are about to change gears here and dig into a specific example.

Now I will press into one example of the grace of God as shown by five in scripture, I will be speaking today on the witness given to us in the two sets of 5 virgins. We will discover what we can learn from the five wise and the five foolish virgins.

### **The Virgins**

Today as we did into the parable of the Wise and Foolish virgins, I want you to pay particular attention to the fact that there are five wise and five foolish virgins. The two sets signify that a witness is to be established here. So we are to learn from what is being illustrated.

### **The Tradition**

To understand this parable, we need some cultural context. Today a young man would simply ask a young woman's father for permission, not so in this context.

A young man would go to the house of the woman he wanted to marry and meet with the young woman and her father with a betrothal contract. In the document the young man would have to clearly and specifically outline how he was going to provide for his bride. He would be expected to state his occupation, salary, and his plans for their living arrangements as well as his general plans and intentions for her.

The father would then make the decision to either accept or reject the man's offer. Now one of the most important issues surrounding the covenant was the bride price. How much was the young man willing to pay for this beautiful woman whom he wanted to marry? The price was usually significant enough to compensate the

family for any losses incurred by the loss of their daughter, but more important, it demonstrated to the father how much the young man loved his daughter. You see the higher the price, the deeper the demonstration of his love for the girl.

Just note here that Christ paid the price for his bride, of his very life-blood. He loves his church so much he gave his very life for her. When we consider the level of his love for us, we should stand in awe.

The next step in the betrothal process was “the Cup”. Essentially, if the contract was accepted by the father the man would pour a cup of wine for his intended and offer it to the woman. She would then drink of the cup to indicate that she had accepted his proposal. At this point they were betrothed.

Now this betrothal was legally binding and was the same as being married only there would be no consummation of the marriage. At this point they could not refuse to marry unless they got a certificate of divorce.

The man would then partake of the cup to indicate that he was joyful that she had accepted him and would receive him as her husband.

Now the couple would then separate and begin to make preparations for the wedding day. They were not permitted to see each other during this process. The betrothal period usually lasted between 12 and 18 months.

Now after the acceptance of the contract the bridegroom would leave the woman with gifts. These were first of all a demonstration of his joy for her acceptance and second a sign of his affection for her. These gifts would also serve as a memento and a reminder for her that even though he would be away he would think of her and was preparing to provide for her. The intent would be for her to think of him fondly and look forward with expectation to their upcoming time together.

Now the young man would go and prepare a place for his bride. Generally this meant going back home to his father’s place and building her a home or building onto his father’s home to prepare a place for her. He would prepare this dwelling for her to the best of his ability...

Now here is the kicker. It was built according to his father’s specification and it would be the father who determined when it was ready for the new bride to be received into the family.

When we now consider John 14:1-4 we now have some significant clarity on Jesus words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled, Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

So you see if here were asked when he would see his bride he would have to say that he did not know the day only his father new the time of his return. When we now read Mark 13:32 we can clearly understand Jesus message: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Now while the groom was off preparing for his bride, the bride was responsible to be ready for his return. (x2 for emphasis)

The bride would keep herself for him and wear a veil in public so others would know she belonged only to her beloved.

She would not know the day or hour of his return, so she had to be ready at all times (x2)

Traditionally the groom would come at night so she had to have her bags packed and lamps filled with oil ready to go.

Now the day would finally come and the father would release his son to go and get his bride. Now all the virgins would wait no knowing who was coming when and when the trumpet sounded. They would all be excited waiting to find out if it was for them that the trumpet sounded.

If she were not ready or waiting for him... he could refuse her

Now let's read the parable...

Matthew 25: NKJV

*The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins*

*" 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.*

Jesus has made grace filled promises to his bride. He has bestowed gifts and blessings. We partake of the cup to remember our Lord and he is coming back. He has gone away to prepare a place for you because he loves you and values you. When the Father has deemed the time his right, he will send his Son to collect his bride. Will you be ready?

*Prayer*