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THE SHUT DOOR

Editorial In Review and
Herald, April 14, 1853,
pp. 188, 189.

The following article written by James White in 1853, gives a clear statement of the parable of the ten virgins, with its "shut door" experience, as seen by that time. Note that by this time the believers had seen that the application of the knocking of the virgins, was in the future, and that the virgins against whom the door was closed represented not the world, but "only those who participated in the advent movement."

The idea of the shut door has been received mainly from the following texts of scripture.

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." Matt. xxv, 10.

"When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are." Luke xiii, 25-27.

The phrase "door of mercy" is much used; yet it is not found in the above texts, or elsewhere in the scriptures. It has been handed down to the Advent people by those who have not closely studied the Bible, and it is to be regretted that they should so freely use it. The impression has been made upon most minds, that this so called "door of mercy" would be closed when Christ is revealed from heaven. But the Lord's mercy, strictly, will never close. "His mercy endureth for ever." In all past time, the mercy of the Lord has ceased to men, and to nations, when they have rejected all the means of salvation which the all-wise Creator could, according to his plan of saving men, set before them. The Lord can do no more than this at the period of his Second Advent.

But neither of the above texts of scripture apply to the Second Advent of Christ. The first, [Matt. xxv, 10,] is a portion of our Lord's statement respecting an Eastern Marriage.

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The coming of the bridegroom, mentioned in this text, is not the coming of Christ. It was an event in the marriage, which only represents an event in the kingdom of heaven.

"And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." This was, also, a literal transaction in the marriage, mentioned by our Lord, and only represents an event in the kingdom of heaven. What is that event? Is it the second appearing of Christ? We answer, that such an application destroys all the harmony of the parable.

If these events in the parable be applied to Christ's second coming, then the going in with him to the marriage, must apply to the resurrected and changed saints being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and entering, with their Lord, the New Jerusalem, or some other place where a door will be closed after they enter.

But we would ask, what door will be closed after the Lord has come, and after the saints are made immortal, and enter the New Jerusalem with their Lord? Is it replied that this is the "door of mercy," or "door of salvation for sinners," we answer, that those who apply these points in the marriage to the Second Advent, believe that such a door will be closed at the moment the Son leaves the right hand of the Father; and for this portion of the parable to harmonize with their views, it should read as follows: And while they went to buy, the door was shut, and the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage. One difficulty in applying these events to the Second Advent is that the shut door does not come until after the Lord descends from heaven, raises and changes his saints, and they go into the New Jerusalem, or some other place, then the door is shut. But look again. The "man of sin" is to be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. 2 Thess. ii, 8. The Lord Jesus is to be revealed from heaven "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be

glorified in his saints." 2 Thess. i, 8, 9. This destruction of the entire wicked takes place at Christ's coming, before he enters the New Jerusalem with the immortal saints. Then how absurd is the application of this part of the parable that naturally leads to the position, that after the Lord has destroyed all the wicked, and takes his saints away from the earth, and goes in with them to the marriage, then the door is shut against the wicked although not one of them is in existence!

But what follows this going in to the marriage, and the shut door? Answer: "Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us."-- Matt. xxv, 11. Now if the coming of the bridegroom represents the Second Advent, and if the going in with him to the marriage, and the shut door, is after the saints are made immortal and all the wicked are destroyed, do tell us, who are these represented by those who "afterwards came," "saying, Lord, Lord" ?-- There is perfect harmony with every part of this parable when correctly applied. And it must all be applied to events that take place prior to the Second Advent. . . . They cannot be applied to a period after the wicked are destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming.

Those who oppose the Advent faith, dispose of the parable in this way. Say they, " it has no particular application anywhere, only that we should be ready to die!" And some of the Advent brethren dispose of it as easily. Say they, "the object of the parable of the ten virgins is to teach us the importance of being ready for the coming of the Lord." That is, the different parts of the parable spoken by our Lord mean nothing in particular. Such a position really seems to be an insult on the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we take the view of this parable that has been taken by the Advent body, a harmony will be seen. The ten virgins represent those who participated, more or less, in the Advent movement. The going forth with lamps, represents the movement of 1843, occasioned by the study and proclamation of the Word. "Thy word is a lamp." Ps. cxix, 105. The tarrying followed, with the slumbering time. The

midnight cry in the parable, represents the powerful and glorious movement, and work of God on the hearts of his people, in the Autumn of 1844. And here we would say that Advent papers, and preachers taught the position we here take, up to the great disappointment, in 1844. And probably no Advent brother would now object to this application, were it not for difficulties they find with the remaining portion of the parable. And many throw the whole away, as having little or no meaning. But what are these difficulties? We will look at them.

1. If the parable all applies prior to the Second Advent, it makes the coming of the Lord spiritual.--Not so. The bridegroom in the parable literally came, and that merely represents the event that took place with our High Priest, at the end of the 2300 days, as he entered upon the antitypical tenth day atonement. This event is also symbolized in Dan. viii, 13, 14. Mark this: The Son of man coming to the Ancient of days, and brought near before him, does not mean his leaving the right hand of the Father, and coming into this world.

2. A second objection to applying the parable to a period prior to the Second Advent, is, that none have gone in with the Lord, and cannot, till made immortal. To this we reply, that in the marriage, they that were ready went in with the bridegroom, and a literal door was shut. Who believes that our Lord is to bolt or bar a literal door? No one. In the marriage, ten virgins walked forth with literal lamps, had literal oil, literally slept, and woke, and five of them walked in with the bridegroom, and a literal door was shut. Not so in the kingdom of heaven. And when it can be shown that this parable designs to teach that a body of christians are to take literal lamps and oil, walk forth, literally sleep and wake, then, and not till then, will we agree, that the going in with the bridegroom must represent immortal saints entering the New Jerusalem with their Lord. But if the lamp represents the Word, and if the going forth of the virgins, represents merely a movement on the manner and time of the Lord's Advent, why may not the going in of the five, be applied in a similar manner, to the faith and feelings of the real Advent believer at the seventh

month, 1844? Where were we as a people? Answer: Entirely separate from the world, and all its interests. An unseen hand had moved us away from the world, and our sympathy was with the Lord, and with his waiting saints.

Then where are we? What is our real position? Answer: "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matt. xxv, 13. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding." Luke xii, 35, 36. It is emphatically the waiting, watching time. Mark this: When our Lord comes to earth the second time, he returns from the wedding. This places the wedding prior to the Second Advent, and confirms the view that the eastern marriage was designed to represent a series of events to take place before Christ comes.

The event represented by the five foolish afterwards coming, and saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," we think, is in the future, and will be seen at the commencement of the day of the Lord, when the last plagues begin to be poured out.

The ten virgins represent only those who participated ⁱⁿ the Advent movement. Those who were not in the movement, and did not reject its light, stand on the same ground for salvation, as though such a movement had never taken place. Those, therefore, who are now looking for the Lord, and are obeying the present truth, may now rejoice in the true application of the parable of the ten virgins, as well as those who shared in the past great and glorious movement.

But what is represented by the shut door in the parable? We have shown the absurdity of applying it to the Second Advent. We can see no other application of the shut door, that will harmonize with other parts of the parable, and with other scriptures, than to our High Priest entering upon the antitype of the ancient tenth day of the seventh month atonement, at the end of the 2300 days, in the Autumn of 1844. His work, performing the antitype of the daily ministration, then must cease in the Holy place of the True Tabernacle, in order for

him to enter the Most Holy place to cleanse the Sanctuary, And as his work closed in the Holy, it commenced in the Most Holy. We think the following, addressed to the Philadelphia church, applies to this subject. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."

Although there is a shut door which excluded those represented by the foolish virgins, (those moved by the proclamation of the Advent, who had none of the grace of God, no real faith,) and also those who were foolish and wicked enough to reject, and fight against the glorious news of a soon coming Saviour, yet we rejoice to publish to those that have an ear to hear, that there is an Open Door. "Behold," says the True Witness, "I set before thee an open door." O, that precious souls would come to this open door, and share the Saviour's pardoning love.

Reader, come along with us to this open door, and see what we will show you. You recollect that the ark containing the ten commandments was placed in the Holiest of the earthly Sanctuary, and was not seen only when the high priest entered to cleanse it. And what does John see, down the stream of time, amid the scenes of the seventh angel? "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament." Rev. xi, 19. Do you see it? God help you to see this open door, and by faith, view the ark, and see the law of God in all its strength and glory. --Review and Herald, April 14, 1853.