

The Absolute Law for Thinking
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Matthew 25:1-13

This passage has a division in terms of mental scope between five foolish virgins and five wise ones. The foolish ones are not ready for any delay, brought no extra oil. They thought everything would go according to plan. The five wise ones were prepared for delay.

All ten became drowsy, all fell asleep—all were subject to the same kinds of effects. In verse 6, the bridegroom arrives. The five foolish are out of oil, and the five wise refuse to share because they didn't have enough for all. They went to the banquet. The five foolish ones were late and were refused entry.

We see a division in their mental scopes -- and, therefore since the Lord's coming will be "like this," we too should plan for the unexpected.

Everyone knows that the clock is clicking toward His return. We must question and challenge all assumptions about the nature of time. Our thinking about time must be governed by the unknown, not the known -- a startling thought

Thus how we think about time must be governed by what we don't know: the hour of His return.

We must consider two things: time, and how we think about it. In 24:44, we are told that He will come at an hour you don't expect him. We are faced with the necessity of recognizing that our perception of time must be governed by something unknown. Both groups assented to the inevitable – His coming—but one group was not prepared.

Jesus gives a thought law and teaches us to obey it in this parable: a law of thought which doesn't govern time, but rather our behavior in time.

God -> revelation -> law of thought -> mind -> obedience -> behavior results.

In the parable, the behavior was to be prepared with extra oil.

In considering this, we are not looking just at doctrines to be obeyed but also thought laws.

All ten virgins were invited, and were welcome. The difference was the laws of thought which predetermined their behavior and led to a predetermined outcome.

They were to be ready or not, day or night, not knowing the hour.

Even now the laws of thinking that we obey are predetermining our behavior and therefore certain outcomes. Thus it's important to understand these absolute laws of thinking.

We can study Scripture looking for doctrines and practices that God requires but not see the laws of thought he requires. We can see this in Genesis 3 with the serpent's discussion with Eve, and at Kadesh Barnea, and elsewhere.

Jesus is not just concerned with a way of thinking but the laws for thinking. They are revealed -- and thus are absolute laws. They are not derived, such as through hermeneutics.

By logic of extension, which is one way of talking about a generalization, we see that anything that God says, produces a consequential thought law. In pragmatic terms, any situation, circumstance, or state of being we face should cause us to seek the answer to one question: What laws of thought should I obey here?

We have two representative ways of doing that.

The foolish virgins could be characterized as casual, less disciplined, with thinking that left out many unknowns (like when does the bridegroom come? Of course, when He wants to.) Their thinking didn't obligate the bridegroom, it only determined their behavior. It did not of course determine reality.

But they thought their thinking would give them an accurate reality. This was a catastrophic error, in believing that one's way of thinking reflects reality. They thought the Bridegroom would be coming soon so there was no need for extra oil.

We could demonstrate this with a circle representing a reference frame for reality, which is larger than time. A dot in the middle of the circle represents the coming of the bridegroom. Their way of thinking became the reference frame for the dot.

We see this in 24:36-41 where their thinking acted as a frame of reference.

The wise virgins obeyed the revealed laws of thinking. They knew what they thought did not frame reality, that their understanding couldn't be fully comprehensive. The foolish ones thought they were fully comprehensive. Only the wise ones could understand that the bridegroom is an independent mind and intelligence who comes when he wants. Thus the revealed laws are determined by a greater reality which is God himself.

Differential question that we must each ask is: Am I foolish or wise? The answer is determined by how I think. A foolish person believes his thinking frames reality. In the thematic, a dot is reality, the frame is their thinking. For the wise, though, the circle is eternal reality which frames the dot of their thinking.

If you are disobedient to the law of thought, you make your own frame for reality. But there is an eternal frame for the wise. The differential between the two is easy to see in one's behavior. For instance, it's evident in the behavior in the days of Noah when he was preaching, they were eating, drinking, giving in marriage, carrying on the routine. They knew nothing until the flood came and carried them away.

All of the things that would unfold with the coming of the Lord unfolded in the shadow of a greater reality. Noah's mind subordinated to the laws of thinking, which are inherent in the Word of God.

Seeking the doctrinal only is a mistake. The coming of the Lord isn't routine – it is not statistically significant because it happens only once. Therefore habitual ways of thinking are not applicable.

Imagine a threshold with lines on each side. On the left, an arrow goes across to the other side. The regular, routine, habitual, pragmatic, acts as a threshold to final catastrophe. You cannot get back from it. It is irreversible.

We see this later in 24:40-41, where two are taken, two are left. We see thresholds to catastrophe.

What is being taught in Matthew 24 to 25 shows revealed or absolute ways of thinking which are made manifest by what the frame is. We see that laws of the mind don't control reality, they don't even frame reality—they only frame our behavior. The law of the mind governs behavior.

At the wedding feast, all behaviors are relative to the coming of the bridegroom. This means that we in the churches can be obedient to doctrines like baptism, the Lord's Supper, other practices; but still in our minds be lawless. We are lawless when we do not obey the laws of thought.

In Hebrews 4:12 we learn that the Word of God judges the thoughts of man. In Psalm 94:11, it says that God knows the thoughts of man. 2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us to take every thought captive. Romans 12 speaks of subjugating the thinking processes for transformation.

How I think and what I think shows this: If I reject revealed truth in favor of what seems to be "reasonable"-- or rational, routine or realistic or common sense or the obvious -- Then I am a fool. According to Matthew 25, a fool thinks all things are as they appear. The quantifiable seems to be the frame.

The Word of God is not just history, it is the present. We might call it the meso-present, or the linguistic present. What is wise versus foolish shows by what comes out of the mouth, and by behavior.

The differential is seen in that a fool depends on the projections he makes about time. We call those “models” today. But ultimate reality can't be modeled. A fool thinks he can work with variables and contingency plans. A fool thinks his or her thinking is at least adequate. The world thinks they are wise.

The wise cross a differential gulf – they know that God is not a variable, He is the determinant. The wise one understands we are being tested --our minds and thought --as prederminate of our behavior. We do not live by the world's rules.

Scripture teaches there is a profound discontinuity: between mind, and body on the other hand; mind and the material context, the mind and human experience. We see this in Genesis 3, and it shows up in Daniel 3 and 6. Each of these chapters both the three men and Daniel say that they would not make their decisions according to the needs of the body.

At Kadesh , this shows up between mind and the material context.

We see it when David numbered the troops, as we read in 2 Samuel 24, with a discontinuity between mind and experience.

All of that overlaps with teaching of the virgins. One controls the other: either mind or experience.

Another great example is seen in Esau in Hebrews chapter 12. He was evil and godless: He didn't respect the profound discontinuity between mind and materiality. He was foolish and evil.

Foolish mind respects no such discontinuity. This is seen in modern-day educational systems. A mind educated by them would think it is free, but it is actually a slave to everything that is passing away.

The mind that's wise is different, and is reined in to the absolute laws of thought; therefore his/her thinking not controlled by the body, “needs,” material context, conditions, nor experience. It is controlled by God. This tells us that such a one is not limited to his cultural universe, not locked into this because such a mind stands outside time in that way.

What happens to a person who is skeptical of this? The one who is not sure that our thinking can be outside time, outside cultural universe? In the churches we are skeptical of that. We question it—not just can we, but should we stand outside time?

We become skeptical to the point of thinking it is too risky. We think it is not the way the world works, or God doesn't work that way anymore. Our children are routinely taught to think that we can't stand outside of time and culture, that we are prisoners of where we are and what we are. They say that the culture we grow up in is determinate. They say that multiculturalism has its own norms; postmodernity says all are different but all

okay. That is a trap. If you say you are prisoner to language groups, time and history, and there is no escape, this is a direct contradiction to what the revelation teaches us.

Therefore don't trust those laws of thought nor live on them. What happens is the oil will run out and we will be shut out of the wedding banquet.

The Lord is not interested in new oil, but in behavior and its precondition: how we think. The wise virgins let the greater reality determine their thinking – which led to their behavior.

Am I wise or foolish? “Being Right” transits through a change of orders. First order is that of man in time and experience and human intelligence. Next you move to the eternal order of absolutes. But from the point of view of the Lord, being a part of the order of being right, the order of man—this is wrong.

By revelation, we are right. Faith is right, says Scripture. But are we still right if our experience ends up being unwarranted, unwanted, intolerable? What is “right”?

This is a delimiting issue. Believers who won't be ready when the bridegroom comes—can we shift them from one order to another?

What is “right?” Or better said, the question should be—“Under which order?”

We transit from what was right according to the thoughts of men when we realize that it is no longer right. We must end up in the absolute.

But what about the unwarranted, unwanted, intolerable? Can we say such unfairness is “right?” But the real issue is God's will, existence, reality – to which I have to subjugate the demands of my mind and my language, my way of thought.

In this passage, the Lord generalizes the story of the virgins to crisis: “As in the days of Noah....”

It tells me to pay attention to how should I think in trial, catastrophe, crushing loss. Matthew 25 teaches that we must obey the absolute laws of thought.

When we obey the absolute laws of thought, we must start with knowing it goes against experience, intuition, will, dictates of the emotions, cultural influences, and traditions.