

**The Parables**  
**Matthew 24:35-25:13**  
**(The Foolish Bridesmaids)**  
**“Always a Bridesmaid, but Never a Bride”**

**Introduction**

Jesus is coming soon! People have been saying that since I was little and actually way before that. I remember as a child hearing a song on the radio by a gospel quartet called “The Inspirations”. I will never forget that chorus:

Jesus is coming soon, morning or night or noon  
Many will meet their doom, trumpets shall sound  
All of the dead shall rise righteous meet in the skies  
Going where no one dies, Heavenward bound

Maybe some of you “old timers” remember that one too. We were taught to believe in Sunday School that Jesus would soon be coming for His Bride, The Church, and we should always be on the look out. Now I don’t know about you, but that always scared me just a little bit when I was young. Don’t get me wrong, I love Jesus and always have since I was first told of His love for me. And I certainly want to see Him one day, but I was always a little terrified of the whole “sky parting” and seeing Him “coming in the clouds” stuff that our preacher was always talking about! I always thought of myself as more of the “now I lay me down to sleep” kind of believer. You remember that prayer don’t you? Can you remember that last part we always said just before mom turned the light out on us? “If I should die before I wake, I pray The Lord my should to take.” Looking back on it now, that one was kind of scary too. Talk about insomnia. Mom just told me that I might not be around in the morning!

The bottom line is this. Scripture requires that believers maintain an attitude of prayer and vigilance (**1 Peter 4:7**), for the end will come both soon and without warning. God will someday come to remove his children from this wicked world. No one knows the day or the hour, but rest assured, that day will come (**Matthew 24:36**). The good news is... for the child of God, there is NOTHING to be afraid of. Rather, it is should be for us a source of great joy. We know that this wicked world will one day have to pay for it’s sins, or God just wouldn’t be who He says He is. However, we have nothing to fear when He does bring His righteous judgment. We have not been destined for wrath (**1 Thessalonians 5:9**). God loves us, and He will take us out of the way when that day finally comes.

Jesus gives us a little insight into what it will be like when He returns. He told His followers that it would be just like the days of Noah. Remember that story? The Bible says that in Noah’s day all people thought about was doing evil (**Genesis 6:5**). Kind of reminds you of how things are today doesn’t it? We live in a world that not only tolerates every kind of moral filth and perversion, but actually celebrates it! No one seems to care about righteousness any more. Everyone lives to satisfy their own lustful desires. Jesus told His disciples that the the people in Noah’s day were living it up (eating, drinking, and getting married), with absolutely no thought of what God may think of their society and its moral decay. That doesn’t mean that eating, drinking, and marrying are bad things. It just means that life on earth shouldn’t just be about earthly pleasures, but it should also be about living in a way that brings honor and glory to God. No one but Noah was doing that back then. No one but true followers of Christ are doing that now. And the number of those seems to be in decline. I believe that we are living in the last days. I’m starting to sound exactly like my preacher when I was a kid! Why? Because he was right, that’s why. Jesus IS coming soon. Now that I’m older and able to fully grasp this truth, I am so looking forward to the day! I want to be ready.

Jesus illustrates our need for preparedness in a parable about ten virgin bridesmaids that were waiting to take part in a wedding processional. In those days, a wedding actually had three separate phases. There was a CONTRACT. This was an agreement made between the groom and the bride-to-be’s father. For any man to marry a young woman in those days, he had to pay the father of the bride a dowry price. After this financial arrangement was settled, then the young man would have permission to ask the young girl to become his bride. This was done very ceremonially by offering the special lady a

glass of wine. If she took the cup and drank from it, then her answer was “yes”. From that point the two could only be separated by divorce, even though they had not actually “come together” in marriage.

The next phase of the wedding was the CONSUMMATION, and yes that means the same thing that it still means today. But before this part of the marriage took place the young groom was required to go back to his father’s land and build and prepare a place for his new bride to live. This would often take a year or sometimes even longer. Only when their new dwelling place was ready did the groom come for his bride. His best man would sound the alarm, often times by blowing on a rams horn (shofar), and there would be a parade of sorts led by the groom to come and get his bride. The bride would be waiting for his coming with her bridesmaids. These were young unmarried girls who were appointed to attend to the needs of the bride, and they would accompany her back to the grooms house carrying torches, and celebrating the coming consummation of the marriage. This joyous processional would often take place in the late evening, thus allowing the wedding guests to finish their work before attending the event.

After the man and woman had spent some time alone honeymooning (which could last anywhere from one night to a week), there was always a CELEBRATION. This was a wedding feast for all the guests to celebrate the happy couple’s new life together. This wedding supper was the third and final phase of the marriage process and could go on for days. It celebrated the fulfillment of a marriage that was a long time in the process. The betrothal period had ended, and finally, the couple could embark on their lifelong journey together as husband and wife.

All three of these marriage components can be found in Christianity as well. The contract was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross and offered His own body to propitiate (satisfy) the Father’s requirement for the “bride price”. When we accept Christ’s proposal of marriage (the cup), our sins are washed away by His blood. These two elements are illustrated for us in the bread and wine, when we take communion. Now we are in the betrothal period, as we await the consummation of our marriage to Christ, when He comes to take us to live at his Father’s house (***John 14:2-3***). When we are taken up to be with Christ, there will be a great celebration called “The Marriage Supper of The Lamb” (***Revelation 19:6-9***). For those of us that have truly been saved, two of these “wedding events” are yet to take place for us. Our groom has been gone for two thousand years preparing a place for us. We must not lose our focus. The wedding will take place. Jesus will keep His promises to us.

In the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, we see the importance of readiness. Each of these young women had been invited to take part in a wonderful celebration of marriage, but unfortunately, when the moment finally arrived, only five of them were actually prepared for the event. It would have been hard to tell just by looking which of these young ladies were ready and which were not. It really came down to one simple truth. Five of them had oil for their torches and five did not. Other than that, they would have appeared the same. All of them had been SUMMONED, all of them grew weary and SLUMBERED, but in the end they were SEPARATED, according to their readiness for the coming of the bridegroom at midnight.

### **Summoned**

To be part of the bride’s wedding day, these women would have been given an invitation. How excited they must have been to be included in the wedding party. To be invited was a great honor. In churches all over the world every week, an invitation goes out for every lost sinner to come and find salvation through God’s amazing grace. Many refuse the invitation, while others come to see what the celebration is all about, but sadly never quite get the message. Oil is a symbol of The Holy Spirit in scripture. A believer, who truly accepts the invitation of Christ to come, will be, as a result, “filled” with the Spirit of God. In other words, their lamps will have oil in them, which in turn enables them to be the ***“light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)***. Jesus is the true ***“Light of the World” (John 8:12)***. In order for us to shine with his light, then He must live IN US! This is what it means to be “Spirit Filled”. Every true follower of Christ will have Christ inside them. There are many people who have been invited to be a part of The Church, The Bride of Christ, but sadly many are not genuine followers of Christ. Oh, they may believe in Him, and they may look and act just like other believers, but they don’t BELONG to Him. They had, for whatever reason, refused to surrender themselves to his Lordship. They have convinced themselves that they are “saved”, simply because they go to church and try to live a good clean life. The

Church has been called a “lampstand” in scripture (**Revelation 1:20**). But, what good is a lampstand that is not filled with oil?

I’m sure that the five foolish bridesmaids thought that they had plenty of time to get oil for their lamps. After all, they had most likely arrived at the house of the bride quite early in preparation for the wedding celebration. The groom would not arrive until much later. People do that all the time: putting off getting right with God, because they believe that have plenty of time. The passage of time quite often gives us a false sense of security. The procrastinators motto: “Why do today, what I can put off until tomorrow?” Unfortunately for many, there IS no tomorrow. Today is the day of salvation (**2 Corinthians 6:2**). Many of you have heard me say this often enough, but I am compelled here to ask the question once more. *Do you “believe” in Jesus, or do you “belong” to Jesus?* There is a huge difference between the two. The devil “believes” in Jesus (**James 2:19**), but he certainly doesn't belong to Him! Surrender total control of your life over to The Lord Jesus Christ and be filled with His Spirit. Get some OIL in your lamp. Don't put it off, or you might find yourself in a panic when the Bridegroom gets back. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian. BEING a Christian, is what makes you a Christian! Be ready when Jesus comes. No one knows how quickly the day approaches, but we all know one thing... today is one day closer than yesterday!

### **Slumbered**

The bridegroom in the story was extremely late, even by the standard of those days. It was expected for him to arrive in the evening, but at midnight? That was most definitely an extreme. Perhaps even the Bride herself was getting a bit anxious about that one. I believe that the grooms “tardiness” is actually a very important part of this parable. The Apostle Peter tell us that, **“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9)**. The very reason that the groom of this story waits until the stroke of midnight tells us not only the unexpectedness of Christ return, but also the heart of Christ, that wants to allow as much time as possible for those who have been “invited” to the wedding to repent and be saved. Just because the groom is late doesn't by any means suggest that He is not deeply in love with His bride. It is, in fact, a proof of just the opposite. It is BECAUSE of his love that he arrives so late!

It is important to note that ALL of the bridesmaids fell asleep. If I am being completely honest here, sometimes I let the cares of this life, along with it's endless business, distract me from the second coming of Christ. How about you? I once read that the Quakers in colonial times used to wake up each morning and look out their window and say, “Maybe today Lord”, and then, at the end of the day, look out that same window and say, “Maybe tomorrow Lord”, before going off to sleep. What a wonderful attitude for a believer to have. If we were all completely honest with ourselves and others, we would have to admit that we sometimes forget that He is coming for us soon. We, just like these bridesmaids, often slumber when it comes to our watchfulness. However, those of us who have been truly born again, cannot ever be caught completely off guard at The Lord's return, for we have His Spirit within us. In the vernacular of the parable, we still have oil in our lamps. Unfortunately, half of the bridesmaids waited too late to remedy their oil shortage. When the cry of the bridegroom was sounded at midnight, they found themselves out of time. Perhaps if the other bridesmaids had not fallen asleep, then the foolish ones would have also had a better sense of the urgent nature of their predicament. Church, we need to make sure that the lost and dying know that the time is short! It is our responsibility to remain vigilant and not allow complacency to cloud our judgment. Jesus is coming soon. We must not lose our focus! This is not the time for slumber.

### **Separated**

When the shout, accompanied by the blowing of the rams horn, announced the sudden appearance of the groom, the foolish bridesmaids begged their better prepared counterparts for some of their oil. On the surface it seems cruel for the wiser bridesmaids to refuse such a request, but in fact they needed all the oil they had in their lamps to make the journey back to the grooms house. The spiritual truth here is simple; you will not be able to enter heaven based on someone else's salvation. Just because your parents, grandparents, or friends are true followers of Christ doesn't meant that you will be

able to enter the kingdom riding on their coattails. They may have their oil, but it is incumbent upon you to secure your own "oil" for yourself. Jesus often asked the question, **"Who do YOU say that I AM?" (Matthew 16:13-30)**. What we decide about who He is will in fact determine whether or not we are filled with His Spirit and have oil in our lamps! The foolish bridesmaids had made a serious error in judgment thinking they had plenty of time to prepare. As they go out in frantic search of oil, they miss the wedding processional back to the grooms house. They had waited too late to make the most important decision. They had been summoned and given ample time to prepare, but chose to slumber, and therefore, in the end they were separated from the wedding celebration.

Jesus is coming back for His Bride. Many have been invited to be part of the coming wedding celebration. The Church is in the "betrothal" phase of its marriage, and for as long as this period of time lasts, there is still an opportunity for those who have been invited to make the necessary preparations for the coming of The Bridegroom. After He comes for us, there will be a great period of tribulation upon the earth, and those who have rejected the invitation of the gospel will not be given another opportunity (**2 Thessalonians 2:11-12**). There will be people saved during the great tribulation period, but not those who rejected the gospel the first time. For them, it will be too late. The Foolish bridesmaids ran to the grooms house and pleaded to be let into the feast. They were refused entry by the groom who claimed that he did not know them (**vs.12**). The fact that they had been invited to the celebration and showed up unprepared was an insult to the groom (**Matthew 22:12-13**). The Bible plainly warns us that those who refuse to repent of their sins will be left outside of the marriage supper of The Lamb (**Revelation 22:15**). We must make our preparations, before it is too late.

In conclusion, I just want to say... knowing that Jesus is without a doubt coming back for us is not cause for fear. Rather, it should be a great source of inspiration and comfort. We have not been forgotten. The groom is still preparing a place for us, and will come again to take us to our new home. What a day of rejoicing and celebration that will be. As we take communion together this morning let us encourage one another with these words:

**The Spirit and The Bride say, "Come."**  
**And let the one who hears say, "Come."**  
**and let anyone who is thirsty come;**  
**let the one who wishes,**  
**take the water of life without cost."**

**Revelation 22:17**

Even so, come Lord Jesus! People get ready, Jesus is coming soon.

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!