

# PARABLES | The Ten Bridesmaids

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## Introduction

Our brains are hardwired for survival. Human beings are wired to fixate on negative information, and potential dangers or threats. *It's what psychologists call our morbid curiosity and fixation with crisis.* This is why everyone slows down around car accidents... we slow down to fixate on crisis, on potential danger.

**Today**, we're going to look at the parable that has some sobering warnings, and lessons included in it — to the point where it can, and has, taken believers **from preparedness to paranoia**. From **readiness — to an obsessiveness** that borders on idolatry.

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## Signs of the end of the age

In Matthew 24, Jesus gives us a detailed description of the signs of the end of the age. When you read it, you can't help but feel like there is a coming crisis, and it sure feels like an accurate description of the world that we're living in today. He's speaking with his disciples they ask Him, what are the signs of the end of the age.

There are going to be:

- False teachers
- Wars and rumors of wars
- Nation against nation
- Severe persecution
- Famines and earthquakes
- Increase of wickedness
- Many believers will fall away
- Betrayals and hatred
- Confusion and deception
- Distress and desolation

We hear all of that and it's pretty easy to see... that's where we are. All of these things are prevalent, not just in our country, but around the world. And in all of the signs that Jesus gives us... we can get so alarmed and fearful, and we fixate on the signs of a coming crisis, and the signs of the return of Jesus, and we *completely miss the rest of the instructions Jesus us in the chapter.*

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## How to respond to these signs

According to Jesus, this is how we should respond to these signs playing out in our day..

### Matthew 24:6

See that you are **not alarmed**...

- It's good to be aware. It's not godly to be alarmed.

- It's good to be prepared. It's not godly to be paranoid.

### **Matthew 24:13**

But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

### **Matthew 24:31**

And He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

**PERSONAL:** When I was a new believer, it always confused me why people were constantly trying to predict the day that Jesus would return... it feels like silly gimmicks to get people worked up... instead of simply just believing what Jesus says...

### **Matthew 24:36**

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

- Not even Jesus knows the day or hour of His return... but somehow we're going to figure it out?
- Just give up. If Jesus doesn't know... you're not going to figure it out.

1. Don't be alarmed.
2. Stand Firm to the end.
3. He will gather His people.
4. Keep Watch.

### **Matthew 24:42**

Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

**Keep watch. Stay vigilant. Don't get lazy. Pay attention. Be ready.**

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## **The Ten Bridesmaids**

And with all of that as a backdrop, Jesus gives us the parable of the ten virgins or ten bridesmaids. The words are interchangeable here. It's simply referring to a young woman who was not yet married that was in a bridal party.

### **Matthew 25:1-13**

“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup> But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ <sup>12</sup> But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ <sup>13</sup> Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

On the night and early morning of November 12th and 13th, 1833. Those who were awake witnessed between 50,000 and 150,000 meteors fall each hour. It's referred to as the day the stars fell... and it was so shocking... the people thought Jesus was coming back that night. And what's so unbelievable about this is that night, slave owners across the south set their slaves free, asked for their forgiveness for what they'd

done because they believed Jesus was coming back... *(which tells us an enormous amount about what these slave owners really thought about slavery...)*.

- The next day... they realized Jesus hadn't come back yet, and they found and re-enslaved the men, women, and children they had just set free.

And as awful and horrific as that is... it reveals something about the human heart.

With Jesus' return being delayed — we think we can get away with sin, that it will remain hidden, and we'll just make it right in the end so we can skirt our way into the kingdom. And what Jesus tells us in this parable, is that's not the way it's going to work.

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## Get ready now and stay ready

In other words, **get ready and stay ready** because if you wait until **the Bridegroom shows up**, it'll be too late.

It's pretty clear to see that in this parable, Jesus is the bridegroom, we are both the Bride (church) and the bridal party in the story.

**Because what this parable tells us is make no mistake, Jesus is coming back for His bride.**

And there will be those who are ready, awake, alert, keeping watch — and then there will be those that are unprepared and lazy.

**CULTURAL CONTEXT:** A Jewish wedding would last up to a week, sometimes longer... the bridal party's job was to get the bride ready and then wait for the groom. When the groom showed up the bridal party would escort the groom to the wedding canopy. After the ceremony, the bridal party would then escort both the bride & groom to the groom's house where the wedding banquet would take place and the whole community would celebrate for days.

Sometimes, if the groom was delayed, he wouldn't show up until late at night when it was dark. There were no street lamps... so the bridesmaids would bring their own lamps, (which is not like a camping lantern, this would be more like a torch... wrapped in linen, soaked in olive oil.)

So, in order to fulfill their duty to escort the groom to the bride so they can have a wedding... and then escort both of them to the banquet, they needed to make sure they had enough olive oil, enough fuel to keep their lamps lit for their one job!

We're not told why five of the bridesmaids didn't bring oil...

- Maybe they didn't think the groom was going to take so long...
- Maybe they overestimated how long their lamps would stay lit...

If there is no oil, there's no fire; no fire, no light; no light, no procession; no procession, no wedding.

And with that understanding, you look at the five who didn't bring oil and just think... **"You had one job!"**



Their one job was to be ready.

What's interesting is the while only 5 bridesmaids forgot to bring enough oil, all ten of them fell asleep on the job.

They all had the same invitation, and they all had the same job description and they all fell asleep. And this is so applicable right now... being faithful and keeping watch can become so exhausting even discouraging after a while, because we're watching the world get darker and darker by the day — wickedness, deception, and confusion in the world are increasing.

- Somehow, moments ago were all about science, but today, we've completely thrown out basic biology... we give women's awards and trophies to men who just decide to say they're women and for some strange reason are allowed to compete... and the feminist movement, who apparently stands for equitable treatment of biological women are strangely silent, while biological males infiltrate and beat out actual women in women's athletics?
- The fact that we now are clarifying, "Is she female or a biological female..."
- The fact that an enormous amount of Williamson County residents have consistently and clearly voiced opposition to the Franklin Pride Festival on a public tax-payer property here in Franklin, even though they violated their permit last year by hosting a drag show, they were not held accountable by the city council for their actions.
- The social pressure for kids now to conform to what is truly evil and destructive that society now celebrates as good, the pressure for kids to conform is so overwhelming...
- I look at all of what's unfolding in our world, I don't know about you, but it just makes me want to say, "Any day now Jesus. Right now would be great..."

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## A warning and an encouragement

But this parable is a warning and an encouragement. As the day gets darker, the more tempting it will become to check out. To fall asleep. ***But as the day gets darker, the more our light is needed.***

It says in the parable that the groom was delayed... He was waiting for something.  
*Do you want to know why Jesus is waiting, delaying His return?*

### 2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that **any should perish**, but that **all** should reach repentance.

**Church we have a job to do.** And we can't fall asleep on the job and expect someone else to pick up the slack.

*If you're here and you don't know Jesus... the reason why He hasn't come back is He waiting for you. Jesus believes your salvation is worth waiting for.*

Jesus believes that all those lost, deceived, confused people out there... are worth waiting for.

- But we all need to understand is that door is not going to remain open forever. There will come a time when those doors will close and all of us will either be on the inside, or outside of that party. I don't know about you, but I don't want anyone to be on the outside of those doors.

Church now is not the time to fall asleep. Now is not the time to grow weary in doing good. Stay with it. Don't get discouraged. What we do, how we live, the way we love one another and the way we love and care for lost people, the kindness we show while refusing to compromise on biblical morality and truth... It Matters. More than you may ever realize...

- So stay alert, keep watch, don't grow weary in doing good, don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with what? **Good.**

If you hear all these things, and you see the signs of the times, and you see the world getting darker and darker... and it *fills your heart with fear, worry, anxiety....*

***Let me just remind you...***

### **1 John 4:18**

There is **no fear** in **love**, but perfect love casts out fear.

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## **The end of the story**

If you need some encouragement today... let just remind you about the end of the story.

There is a day coming when Jesus will come back. And He doesn't come back as the suffering servant... He comes back as a conquering king. Riding on a white horse, his sword and robe dipped in blood... a big ole tattoo on his thigh that reads "King of kings and Lord of Lords" just in case we forgot who he was...

He'll gather us all up and we're going home! When Jesus comes back... His followers win! The victory has already been won... and we're going to pull up a seat at His table and have a heavenly feast!

Listen, I'm not that fast, but when the trumpet blasts... I'm beating everyone single one of you to Jesus.

**PERSONAL:** Last year in the DR, after sharing the gospel with a local baseball team, Charlie Pray and I challenged the whole team to a footrace... we got smoked.

But I'm kicking into a different gear when Jesus returns! And I'm out. No more. We're done. No more opinions. No more outrage. No more sin. No more opinions. No more social media. No more confusion. No more loss or pain. No more deception.

And we're all going to gather around *one* throne, we're going to worship *one* King, with the eternal song of heaven.

### **Revelation 4:8**

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

## Revelation 4:11

“Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...

...and then as we join the wedding feast of the lamb, it is going to be the best party ever!

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## You are responsible for your own oil

And as good as that is going to be one day... we need to recognize that there is a point of no return. At one point, the groom is going to close the door... and it won't be opened again.

**OBJ:** Well Rob, I don't like about Christianity is the idea of God closing the door.

Neither do I... but I'm not God. He is. And the good news is today, ***the door is still open if you would confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord. The promise of scripture is that if that's you... you will be saved.***

You know what that's called: **Grace.**

And what's amazing to me... if I were God, this whole thing would have wrapped up a long, long time ago. And yet God, in His mercy and patience... not desiring that anyone should be lost... has left the door open to you one more day.

That's called grace...

Some of the bridesmaids didn't share their oil with the others... there's so much symbolism here but what I want you to see today is...

### IMPORTANT:

- You can't enter the wedding with borrowed oil.
- You are responsible for your own oil.
- BYOO... Bring your own oil.

In other words, you can't enter the kingdom by riding the coattails of someone else's faith. You might have been raised in church, your grandparents might have been missionaries, but at the end of the day, if you're basing your entrance into the Kingdom of God off of someone else's faith, the parable tells you, you're not getting in.

- You are responsible for YOUR faith.
- You are responsible for how you respond to the gospel.
- You need your own fuel... you need your own relationship with Jesus.
- You need to decide if you are going to FOLLOW CHANGE MISSION.
- ***But no one else can decide that for you. It is your choice.***

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## What is the conclusion of the matter

And for those who have made that decision, let me get practical. What is the conclusion of the matter...

**Be prepared with light.**

The church has an incredible opportunity in the world right now. Because ***what happens as the darkness gets darker... the light gets brighter. It's more visible. Noticeable. Evident.***

We have a choice to make too... will we be ready? Not only for the groom as He returns for His bride...

- Will we be ready with answer for the hope that we have?
- Will we be ready to love and serve our neighbors?
- Will we be ready to love the lost?
- Will we be ready to be kind to the hurting, broken, and confused?
- Will we be ready to bring His light into dark places?

Because one day, for those of us who believe... one day, we're going to use the light we've been given ***to welcome the return of the One who is the Light of the World.***

**We want as many people as possible coming with us.  
"You are now entering the mission field."  
We cannot wait for the lost to come to us.  
We have to go out to them.**

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## **Discussion Questions**

1. How are you personally responding to the signs of the end of the age?
2. How did Jesus instruct us to respond to these signs?
3. How are you personally preparing for the Return of the Bridegroom?
4. Discuss: "As the day gets darker, the more our light is needed." How?
5. Ponder on: "The door is not going to remain open forever." How does that reality impact your daily life in relation to those you know who do not know Jesus?
6. What does, "You are responsible for your own oil" mean? How can this knowledge help you in talking to friends who are not saved yet?

## **NOTES**