

BRIDESMAIDS: BE WISE | MATTHEW 25:1-13

THE CONTEXT:

Matthew 25:1 starts “At that time...”. At *which* time? Read Matthew 24:3.

Tonight’s parable is one of five Jesus told as part of his answer to that question. Commentator Michael Green sets up our theme: “*The world is not headed for ultimate chaos and disaster but for the return of the King and his coronation.... Christian hope rides high, because the grave was not able to hold down the author of life. But what difference does such hope make to daily life?*” We’ll answer this at the end of the evening!

READ MATTHEW 25:1-13

WHAT WE’RE LOOKING FORWARD TO...

- Who is the bridegroom of verse 1? See also Matthew 9:15 and Ephesians 5:31-32.
- What features of weddings make them great reminders of what the return of Christ will be like?

WHEN WE’RE LOOKING FORWARD TO...

- We can be tempted to doubt whether Jesus is really coming back because it seems to be taking such a long time. **Why is it encouraging to read that Jesus himself says ‘the bridegroom was a long time in coming’? (v5)**
- **What does Jesus say about any attempts to predict the time of his return? (v13)**

WHAT ‘LOOKING FORWARD’ MEANS...

- Weddings at this time included feasting and music lasting up to two weeks! That’s quite a party to miss out on, and it would begin at an unknown hour when the bridegroom arrived. Waiting an unknown time for the bridegroom was all part of it. Once he arrived and the door was shut, there was no possibility of late arrival. **How does this background emphasise the foolishness of the virgins who did not bring spare oil?**
- The ten virgins here represent the visible church. Having a working lamp to provide light for the bridegroom’s arrival was really a fundamental part of the virgins’ job at the wedding; those without light would have been assumed to be gate-crashers. **In light of this...**
 - **What does the failure to bring spare oil (v3) suggest about the foolish virgins’ attitude to the wedding?**
 - **Why could the foolish virgins not borrow oil from the others? (v9) How is personal faith like this?**
 - **What does it mean for the church today that some who outwardly appeared to be part of the gang waiting for the bridegroom did not ultimately enter the feast? (v11-12)**
- *The terrifying words of verse 12 are not a calloused rejection of those who had a real, grace-given desire to enter the kingdom. Rather, they are a rejection of those who, despite outward appearances, never made even the most basic preparation for the coming King in the first place.*

HOW TO BE READY...

- **What do we need to be doing in order to spiritually ‘keep watch’ (v13) for Christ’s return?** Notice that the wise virgins fell asleep (v5) but were still welcomed in (v10). Sleeping is part of the business of life!
- **How must we prepare for the judgement of Christ’s return?** Read Revelation 19:6-10 and Isaiah 61:10. Where do our wedding garments of righteousness come from? Who takes the action? Praise God for his grace!

CLOSING THOUGHT:

“What difference does such hope make to daily life?”

PRAYER:

Prayers from the passage | Prayers for your group | Prayers for our church