

Are You Prepared?

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In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus tells the story of the ten virgins going to meet the bridegroom. The virgins each took their lamp. The NASB divides them into two groups: the “prudent” and the “foolish”. The prudent took oil with their lamps along on the journey. This was beneficial as the bridegroom was delayed. While waiting, all fell asleep and when it was time to await the bridegroom, the foolish realized they were in need of oil. While buying some from the market, they missed their opportunity to enter with the bridegroom. There are a few points that can help with finding a better understanding of this parable.

First, notice that all ten virgins were invited to come. While there are other issues in this story for their group, they all were invited to come. Note that they each received the same invitation, while not inherently expressed, because they traveled as a group together to meet the bridegroom. They came to the same location together to meet the bridegroom. When the delay came, both groups slept while they waited. In many ways, there are many similarities between the two groups. They were close to each other, but not exactly the same.

Secondly, not only were they similar in that they were invited to come, but both groups made preparations. This point is often overlooked in the parable. Both groups made preparations, just they were not all the same. All ten brought their lampstand. Only some of them brought additional oil with them for a possible extended wait or journey. They arrived together to wait. That as well took preparation together to travel to the location of meeting the bridegroom. Both answered an invitation to come and meet the bridegroom.

Unfortunately, some of the preparations were lacking. The foolish virgins did not bring enough oil. They were not prepared for a prolonged stay or longer journey. When the bridegroom was delayed, this caused issues for them. The wise prepared for themselves, but not for others. If they would have tried to give of their oil to the foolish ones, it would have left them without enough to wait. The foolish virgins wanted enough time, since the prudent could not share, to go to the market and buy some oil. They lacked in their preparation, and therefore were caught off guard when the call came for the Bridegroom.

Only those who were ready entered into the joy of the bridegroom. When the call was made, those standing by had to present themselves as ready when the bridegroom came. Only the

ones who had enough oil to wait were able to enter. Because the foolish were unready to answer the call, they were unable to enjoy the presence of the bridegroom. Once those who were present at the coming of the bridegroom came, the **door was shut!** None more could enter.

The door did not reopen! Remember that these foolish virgins who knocked and sought admittance were invited guests. Not only were they invited, but they'd even accepted the invitation. They left unprepared, before the coming of the bridegroom with the thought that they would be accepted into the presence. The door did not open for those who were almost there when the bridegroom came. Close did not count for credit in this parable! Those who were unprepared did not enter. There were no second chances or waiting for a set amount a time before entering, rather they were kept out and apart from the others.

There is a lot of personal application in this parable. Comparing this to the Jesus' return, only those who are ready when He arrives will enter into the joy of the Master. Notice though how all those who were responded in the parable were invited guests, otherwise they would not have been there watching for the bridegroom. Many are invited to come to Jesus and await His return. Several respond to the invitation and await Him, but yet some grow weary due to their lack of preparedness.

Neither group came completely unprepared. They both made the decision to respond and look for the bridegroom. They both brought along some provisions for a trip. Only a few were ready for the "long haul". The others did not prepare to stay in for the entire course. Christ's return is at an unknown time. Those looking for Him, but run the race patiently, watching for His coming and not abandon their place. Christianity requires preparation. One must plan to faithfully serve God. It does not come as an inherited skill once obeying the Gospel. Faithful service is not a trait anyone is born with, but rather something that must be taught and learned. Failure to prepare will keep one from entering.

Only those who have carried themselves faithfully in service to God will be able to enter into the joy of the Master. Without preparation, one will miss the call. The bridegroom comes once. There are no alternative time-slots or a second chance. Unlike how some believe in the religious world, there is not a period of time to suffer apart from Him before being allowed into the joy. The door will not reopen. When Christ comes or this life is over, there is no time to plan or correct then. Judgment will come and those will be separated and the gates of Heaven will not open for those who missed the chance. What a sobering thought that if one fails to be awake and prepared, they can miss out on the joy. — **CW**