

# Unpacking the Parables

## Part 7 - The Ten Virgins

Today's parable (Matthew 25:1-13) is a part of a bigger conversation Jesus is having with His disciples in response to their request to know what would signal Jesus' coming and the end of the age (Matthew 24:3). Jesus then starts to talk to them about the last days. He made it clear that the end would not come immediately, but only after considerable time and troubles (Matthew 24:4-31).

He makes it very clear to keep watch, be ready because you won't know when Jesus is coming back (Matthew 24:43-44).

The general meaning here is simply - to be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus. But as we see there is also some specific meaning symbolised by the ten virgins - five wise, five foolish.

Jesus chooses to use a wedding scene as a parable, to illustrate further what He means by the command, "Watch!" His attention is not focused on the bride or the bridegroom but on ten young ladies who were invited to the wedding.

The Church is like those waiting for the Bridegroom (Christ) to come. Like the parable, the Church is made up of people with varying degrees of expectancy, maturity and spirituality awaiting the return of Jesus.

### Foolish Christians

*"The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them."  
Matthew 25:3(NIV)*

We know that oil in the Bible is often used to symbolise the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is symbolised by fire—as on the Day of Pentecost— but fire comes from oil. If there is not enough oil, then there will be no fire.

What is required to keep the flame of the Holy Spirit alive and well in you that you won't be classified in the foolish group?

Do we value the presence of God enough that it makes a difference in your everyday habits to be with Him?

A fool does not listen to correction (Proverbs 12:15). They are unteachable (Proverbs 23:9). But there is something else about a fool. They will be caught out, left short eventually.

## **Wise Christians**

*"The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps."*

Matthew 25:4 (NIV)

This verse indicates that a mature Christian knows you can't go on enduring in your faith without the Spirit. Mature Christians will ensure that they have an adequate supply of oil.

Have you come to appreciate how precious Holy Spirit is? Are you at the place where you would never want to grieve Him or to quench His ability to work in your life? (Ephesians 4:30)

A wise person also accepts a rebuke (Proverbs 9:8).

## **Stay Awake**

*"The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep."*

Matthew 25:5 (NIV)

There are three things to note about sleeping:

1. You don't realise you are asleep until you wake up.
2. When you are asleep, you dream of things that wouldn't cross your mind if you were awake.
3. You Dislike the Sound of the Alarm.

## **The Wakeup Call**

*'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'*

Matthew 25:6 (NIV)

Today might be a wakeup call where we attend to our spiritual lives and our relationship towards Holy Spirit because if you don't you might miss out.

## **Some Will Lose Their Reward**

*"The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut."*

Matthew 25:10 (NIV)

Only the wise young women made it into the marriage celebration. It is a description of those who will be saved by fire (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). They will lose their reward.

There is a reward for the wise that have the Holy Spirit's fire burning brightly in them both now and at the final fulfilment.

This parable is designed to wake us up. Return to allow your first love of Jesus (Revelation 2:4) to burn brightly within you in readiness for all that He wants to do now in and through you.

## Action

Make sure the disciplines of staying close to Jesus are exercised keeping you ready at every moment for what Holy Spirit wants to do through you.

Check out Riverlife Podcast 'Going Deeper' – [riverlifechurch.org.au/podcasts/](http://riverlifechurch.org.au/podcasts/) for some ideas on spiritual disciplines.

## Discussion Questions

1. Read back through the parable. What distinguished the difference between the wise and foolish young women?
2. What is required to keep the flame of the Holy Spirit alive and well in you that you won't be classified in the foolish group? Do you value the presence of God enough that it makes a difference in your everyday habits to be with Him?
3. Jesus pulls no punches in saying that the wise will be open to rebuke but the foolish not so. None of us would say that we are openly trying to be foolish; however, how do we sometimes not pay attention to the gentle challenge of the Holy Spirit?
4. The young women fell asleep while waiting for the groom (Matthew 25:5). What does it look like when a believer falls asleep spiritually? Is there an area of your life where you need to heed the wakeup call?
5. What are the rewards now we enjoy when we burn brightly with Holy Spirit's flame?