

PART 6

THE BRIDEGROOM IS COMING

At midnight a cry was heard: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"

MATTHEW 25:6, NKJV

DAY 39

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

MATTHEW 25:1

Curious about the end-times, the disciples asked Jesus, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3). Jesus answers their question with a detailed description of end-time events (Matt. 24-25). These two power-packed chapters contain some of the clearest information about what will happen just prior to the Lord's return. Matthew 24 describes the tribulations that will take place on the earth. There will be famines, earthquakes, wars, upheavals, offenses, apostasy, persecution, and the worship of the Antichrist. What many people fail to understand, however, is that Matthew 25 is still part of the Lord's answer to the disciples' question about the end-times. Because Bible translators inserted a chapter break between Matthew 24 and Matthew 25, we falsely assume that these two chapters are unrelated. But nothing is further from the truth. In fact, Matthew 25 describes how the Church should live in the end-times.

Jesus said, "Then the kingdom of heaven will be compa-

rable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom” (Matt. 25:1). Whenever we see a then in Scripture we should always seek to know when. When will the kingdom of heaven be like virgins seeking the Bridegroom? In the end-times just prior to the Lord’s return.

In this parable, Jesus used the common Jewish marriage custom to describe the end-time Church. This ancient custom consisted of three main phases: The arrangement, the betrothal, and the wedding ceremony. In this parable, Jesus is teaching us that the end-time Church will be just like the last phase of an ancient Jewish wedding ceremony.

In the culminating phase of an ancient Jewish wedding, the betrothed bride waited on the groom to take her to their new home. This waiting period, which took place after the bride and groom were betrothed, usually lasted for a year. During this time, while the bride and groom were separated, the groom was responsible to prepare their house and the bride was responsible to make her wedding dress. Neither the groom nor the bride knew the exact hour of the wedding—only the groom's Father. Thus, the bride had to wait expectantly for her bridegroom so that she would be ready when he returned.

What a beautiful picture this paints of the end-time Church. As those who are betrothed to Jesus Christ, we are just like the bride in an ancient Jewish wedding. We are to wait eagerly for our Bridegroom to return and take us to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. How are you waiting? Are you looking forward to that day and making yourself ready? Or have you gotten distracted with the cares of the world? Let’s make a decision today to wait expectantly for our Bridegroom. Let’s keep our minds focused upon Him and our

hearts yearning for His return. Let's unify our hearts with the Holy Spirit and cry out for our Bridegroom to come.

DAY 40

BETROTHED VIRGINS

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

MATTHEW 25:1

Alluding to the ancient Jewish marriage custom, Paul told the Corinthians, “I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin” (2 Cor. 11:2). As believers in Christ, we are pure virgins who have been betrothed to Jesus. Through the blood of Christ, we have been justified and our spirit has been made perfect (Rom. 5:1; Heb. 12:23). Just as a virgin has not been defiled by immorality, believers have been given a new spirit that is pure. Our spirit is alive because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10). Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). When we were born-again, our spirit was recreated in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Eph. 4:24). Our spirit is now holy, pure, and undefiled. There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ. How desperately we need a revelation of what God has already done in our hearts and spirits! In the eyes of God, we are pure virgins. We have been cleansed, justified, and betrothed to Jesus—our Heavenly Bridegroom.

In the ancient Jewish marriage custom, betrothal was more formal and far more binding than an engagement is to-

day. If for some reason a marriage between a betrothed bride and groom did not take place, the bride could not be married to another man until she received a certificate of divorce. This is what our relationship with Christ is like. We are pure virgins who are betrothed to Jesus. This means that we are His Bride. What an honor to be the Bride of Christ! We are not just bound to Him by a contract; we are bound to Him by a blood covenant—the New Covenant. In a world where so many people struggle to know who they are, we can rest in our identity as the Bride of Christ.

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus is showing us what the end-time Church will be like. It will be like ten justified, pure, undefiled, betrothed virgins waiting for the Heavenly Bridegroom to take them to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The main issue in this parable is how are we waiting. Five of the virgins waited for the Bridegroom wisely. Five of the virgins waited for the Bridegroom foolishly.

How are you waiting? Are you waiting for the Bridegroom with wisdom? Or are you waiting for the Bridegroom foolishly? Are you a wise virgin or a foolish virgin? The end-time Church must meditate upon the parable of the ten virgins so that we will see our great need to make ourselves ready.

DAY 41

THE LAMP OF THE LORD

*Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,
but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

MATTHEW 25:3-4, NKJV

As the return of Christ draws closer, the parable of the ten virgins will become a major focus in the Church. Right now, the main focus of the Western Church is how to get healthy, wealthy, and wise. But that focus will change before the Lord returns. The end-time Church will be just like a bride in a Jewish wedding waiting for the Bridegroom to return.

If we want to be prepared for eternity, the parable of the ten virgins is a teaching that we must thoroughly understand. This parable is saturated with symbols that we must rightly interpret if we want to be ready for the Bridegroom.

Jesus describes ten virgins. Five are wise and five are foolish. Both virgins took lamps with them, but the light of the foolish grew dim until their oil was depleted and their light went out. In this parable, the lamp is the vessel that contains the fire and the oil. The fire brings forth light, but it must be empowered by the oil. The light is external and the oil is internal.

In this teaching, let's look at what the lamp symbolizes. Jesus said that the lamp of the body is the eye. If the eye was

single, the whole body would be full of light (Matt. 6:22-23). Solomon said that our spirit is the Lord's lamp (Prov. 20:27). John the Baptist was called “the lamp that was burning and was shining” (John 5:35). From these Scriptures, we see that the lamp is our spirit. If our spirit is focused on the Lord, our whole body will be full of light. On the other hand, if our spirit is distracted, our body will full of darkness. The lamp is what shines God’s light in us to a dark and hurting world. The degree of light we shine to the world depends upon the amount of oil that we have. The lamp is the container of fire and oil. Therefore, the lamp is our spirit. The more oil we have in our lamp, the more light we will shine. That means we need to be constantly renewed in our inner man with the Holy Spirit’s presence. The oil of intimacy is what will cause light to shine.

When the Lord described the virgins, both the wise and foolish had lamps. They both had the same capacity to be ignited by fire and empowered by oil in order to shine brightly. Yet the foolish virgins’ hearts were not properly prepared. They were low on oil. As a result, their light was burning out.

In light of this parable, let’s ask the Lord to prepare our hearts. Let’s make waiting on the Lord a high priority. Getting more oil is a crucial need in our lives. Let’s ask the Lord for more of the Holy Spirit’s oil so that we would be like John the Baptist—a bright and shining light in our generation.

DAY 42

THE OIL OF PREPARATION

*Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,
but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

MATTHEW 25:3-4, NKJV

In the parable of the ten virgins, the most important thing to understand is that we need more oil. Wise virgins are those who make sure they have plenty of oil to keep their lamps burning. So what does the oil symbolize? What is the oil that kept the wise virgins' lamps burning? How did a lack of oil cause the foolish virgins' lamps to burn out?

To answer these questions, let's look at what the oil symbolizes. In the Bible, oil often represents the Holy Spirit. When Samuel anointed David with oil, the Spirit of God came upon him mightily (1 Sam. 16:23). The anointing oil is synonymous with the Holy Spirit's power and presence in our lives (1 John 2:20, 27). Therefore, the oil in this parable represents the activity of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Notice the key word activity. All believers have been sealed by the Spirit and have the Holy Spirit within them. Yet few allow the Spirit to have them. As James testifies, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously" (James 4:5). We must yield to the Spirit's work in us.

Not only does the oil represent the Holy Spirit, it also

symbolizes preparation. Because the wise virgins had oil, Jesus identified them as “those that were ready” (Matt. 25:10). This also means the foolish virgins, who did not have oil, were not ready. So getting more oil means that we are actively preparing ourselves to meet the Lord.

Another thing to consider is that oil has several characteristics. Oil tenderizes and softens and is flammable. This shows us the Holy Spirit’s ability to tenderize and soften our hearts before God, causing the fire in us to burn brighter.

In summary, oil represents the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives as He prepares us for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. As we wait on the Lord for more oil, the Holy Spirit touches our hearts and begins to prepare us for eternity. He forms Christ within us and ignites us with a holy passion for Jesus. As we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to have His way, our lamps will be filled with oil, we will have bright and shining lamps, and we will be ready for the Bridegroom when He returns.

A PERSONAL HISTORY IN GOD

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

MATTHEW 25:4, NKJV

Oil is one of the most precious commodities in the kingdom of God. In the parabolic language of Jesus, oil represents the Spirit of God preparing our hearts for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The oil is the Holy Spirit's tenderizing power upon our heart—enflaming us with holy passion for Jesus. Without oil, our light will grow dark. We need more oil. We need to yield ourselves wholly to the Spirit of God that He might prepare us for Jesus.

Notice the wisdom of the prudent virgins: “But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (Matt. 25:4). The wise virgins, knowing that their lamps would eventually run out of oil, took a vessel to store extra oil. Wise preparation is what separates the wise from the foolish virgins. Over the months and years, the wise virgins had developed a history of storing extra oil so that their lamps would not burn out. This shows us the foresight and prudence of the wise virgins. They prepared for a possible delay in the Bridegroom's return. The wise virgins did not live a careless life. They were focused, disciplined, and diligent in their pursuit of oil.

Later in this parable, when the foolish virgins wanted to

go through the door into the wedding, Jesus stopped them, saying, "I do not know you" (Matt. 25:12). If God is all-knowing, how could Jesus say that He did not know the foolish virgins? Because He is not referring to knowing about them; He was speaking about knowing them intimately. Jesus did not have intimate fellowship with the foolish virgins. As a result, the foolish virgins ran out of oil and their lamps went out. The foolish virgins did not have a secret history in God.

The wise virgins, on the other hand, had oil in vessels with their lamps. They had a secret history in God. The wise virgins knew God, and in their pursuit of intimacy with God, were adequately prepared. Likewise, let us press on to know the Lord intimately. Begin today developing a secret history in God. Make a choice to pursue the oil of intimacy every day. Cultivate intimacy with Jesus now so that you will be prepared for eternity. Let us all imitate the wise virgins and press into the intimate knowledge of God. Like John the Apostle, let us rest our head against the heart of Jesus and hear His heart.

DAY 44

THE BRIDEGROOM'S DELAY

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

MATTHEW 25:5, NKJV

One of the main ways that God refines His people is through the fire of delayed answers. Throughout Scripture, God makes a promise to His people, but He waits to fulfill the promise until His perfect timing. Abraham was promised a child, but had to wait twenty-five years before his promise was fulfilled. Joseph was promised to rule over his family, but had to endure thirteen years of intense preparation. David was promised a kingdom, yet for many years he was hiding for his life in a cave. Though all of these promises eventually came to pass, God used the delay to prepare His people for greatness.

In the same way, Jesus has been promised a wife, but the fulfillment of this promise has been delayed. In fact, we are now living in the time of “the Bridegroom's delay.” In His infinite wisdom, the Father has delayed the time when Jesus will come for His Bride so that she will use this precious time to make herself ready.

During the Bridegroom's delay, the wise virgins developed a secret history in God. They used the delay to their advantage. They did not allow their love to grow cold and

their oil to be depleted. Instead, they wisely pursued the oil of intimacy. They used the delay to develop a deep relationship with the Holy Spirit. Though none of us enjoy waiting for anything, we can use the Bridegroom's delay to our advantage. We can make a choice that we will seek the oil of intimacy every day of our lives. If we don't use our time wisely during the delay, we will not be prepared for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

During the Bridegroom's delay, it is natural to grow weary and apathetic. In this parable, even the wise virgins slumbered. However, because the wise virgins had developed a secret history in God, they had enough oil to keep their lamps burning. During this dispensation of time called "the Bridegroom's delay," let us seek wisdom more fervently. Let us buy more oil that we might be prepared. Let us use this time to be made ready as a wife adorned for her husband.

DAY 45

WHEN THE LIGHT GOES OUT

*And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out."*

MATTHEW 25:8, NKJV

At the end of the age, panic will overtake many who are not properly prepared. In the parable of the ten virgins, when the foolish virgins realized their oil was gone, they said, "Our lamps are going out." Jesus' Sermon on the Mount warning was coming to pass—"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23). Jesus warned that our light would grow dark if our focus was taken off of Him. If we serve two masters, our light will be extinguished.

When Jesus was revealed in His glory to John the Apostle, He rebuked the Ephesians for losing their first love. The Ephesians were faithful, persistent, and discerning. They hated evil and were committed to the work of ministry. Yet the Lord said, "I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (Rev. 2:4). As a result, the Lord warned that He would take away their lamp stand if they did not repent.

We tend to think of adultery, greed, pride, or the love of money as the great fall from grace. Yet these are usually

symptoms of a greater problem—losing our first love. Jesus told the Ephesians, “Remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent” (Rev. 2:5). Falling from the pinnacle of first love will cause our light to grow dark, and like Jesus said, how great that darkness will be.

During “the Bridegroom’s delay,” the foolish virgins lost their first love. Their focus was taken off of Christ and placed onto other things—possibly good things. The light that was in them grew dark as their oil supply went dry.

In light of this parable, examine your heart. Have you lost your first love? Have you become so busy that you don’t take the time to seek the face of God? Are you too preoccupied with good things, even the work of ministry, that you neglect to pray, worship, or meditate upon the Word of God? Has your love grown cold? Do you have true passion for Jesus?

Now is the time to cultivate holy passion for God’s Son. Don’t wait until it is too late. Make loving Jesus your highest priority.

DAY 46

THE SECRET PLACE

*And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out."*

MATTHEW 25:8, NKJV

In the parable of the ten virgins, the foolish were seeking oil from the wise. In the church today, we often see the very same thing. Many are following the latest prophet or apostle seeking a word from God. Many go from conference to conference, ministry to ministry, seeking the newest and freshest move of God. Others have incorrectly idolized their minister or worship leader. Still others spend more time talking about what their favorite evangelist said. This is similar to what took place between the wise and foolish virgins.

Instead of buying their own oil, the foolish virgins sought oil from the wise. The wise had their own relationship with Jesus while the foolish did not make intimacy with the Lord a priority. As a result, the foolish were begging the wise for oil. This was oil that the wise had purchased with their hard-earned money. Though the wise had paid a high price to purchase oil, the foolish were trying to get oil without paying for it. They were moochers.

This scenario shows us that each of us must have our own relationship with Jesus. We cannot depend upon our

favorite teacher, prophet, friend, or pastor for oil. We must pay the price and purchase oil for ourselves.

The foolish virgins were lazy, undisciplined, and distracted. They were moochers who were depending upon others to provide for them. They did not go into the secret place of the Most High and buy oil for themselves. How desperately we need to hear this warning. Yes, we must learn to receive from one another, but not at the expense of our own relationship with God. Each of us must pursue intimacy with Jesus for ourselves and stop depending on others for oil.

There is a secret place where God unveils Himself to the hungry. David described it in Psalm 91:1: “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (NKJV). Each of us must use wisdom and enter into the secret place of the Lord for ourselves. In the secret place of God's presence, we grow in the intimate knowledge of God. It is here, hidden from the eyes of the world, that Christ unveils His beauty to His Bride. The secret place is always available to us by faith. Let us abide there.

DAY 47

THE COST OF OIL

But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves."

MATTHEW 25:9, NKJV

In the economy of God, oil is one of the most precious commodities. Oil is the activity of the Holy Spirit upon our heart as we fully yield to God. The Holy Spirit's oil softens and transforms our hearts into passionate lovers of God. Just as precious commodities are expensive, oil in the kingdom of God is very costly. When the foolish asked the wise for oil, the wise responded, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves."

Oil is expensive. The foolish virgins choose not to pay the price for oil. Yet in the end, they paid a much more severe price—they were not allowed to enter through the door into the wedding. The wise virgins, on the other hand, paid a high price for the oil that kept their lamps burning.

In the same way, if we want to be prepared for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, we must discover how to purchase oil. Most of us want to experience the life of Christ, but we don't want to get out of our comfort zones. We want oil, but only if it is convenient and cheap. The price of oil, however,

is both costly and time-consuming. Waiting on the Lord requires waking up earlier than we like, persisting through mundane and dry prayer times, and remaining faithful to meditate upon the Word—even when we don't feel like it. Purchasing oil will cost us time, money, and even friends. Yet the rewards for having oil cannot even compare to the small price that we have to pay.

The wise virgins knew the expensive cost of oil, but they considered being eternally prepared for Jesus worth any price they had to pay. The wise virgins were quick to point out the cost of oil to the foolish—and we must heed this same advice. While the Bridegroom delays, we must pay the price and buy more oil today. Let's surrender our entire life to Jesus in a new way. Give the Lord your time, money, relationships, and ministry. As we take up our cross and follow Jesus, we will have sufficient oil and our lamps will burn brightly.

BUYING OIL FOR YOUR OWN LAMP

But the wise answered, saying, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.”

MATTHEW 25:9, NKJV

When Jesus rebuked the Laodicean church for being lukewarm, He offered them wise advice, saying, “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich” (Rev. 3:18). In the kingdom of God, wealth is measured by the amount of gold that we have bought during our seasons of refining. In essence, Jesus was saying that in order to be truly rich, we must go through the refiner’s fire and buy gold in the midst of God’s dealings. As we emerge from the refiner’s fire, we will not be burned—only burning, as the fire of holy passion consumes us.

The wise virgins offered the same type of council to the foolish virgins that Jesus offered to the Laodiceans—advice that we must also heed. The wise said, “Go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” Each of us must pay the price and buy oil for ourselves. We cannot buy oil for anyone else. The NAS translation of this verse says, “Go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.” In this verse, the dealers represent the dealings of God. We buy oil from the dealers as we come to God and ask Him to have His way with us.

To purchase oil from God, the main thing that we will have to sacrifice is our time. Buying oil takes time. We cannot watch television and expect to buy oil from God. It is a time-intensive process, a process that requires waiting upon God in prayer and worship. This is seen at the conclusion of this parable. Jesus says, “Watch therefore.” Watching is often coupled with prayer. Jesus told the disciples to “watch and pray” (Matt. 26:41). Watching is when we are alert and waiting upon God in prayer and worship. This is the main way the wise virgins bought oil—they learned the secret of waiting upon God in prayer.

Take some time today and wait upon God. Don’t just pray—watch. Keep your spirit alert to what the Holy Spirit might speak to you. Ask the Lord to help you develop a secret history in God. Pursue the oil of intimacy—pay the price. Sacrifice some of your time, go to the dealers, and learn to fellowship with the Holy Spirit. As you do this, you will enter the joy of communing with the Holy Spirit.

DAY 49

MAKING YOURSELF READY

And while they went to buy the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

MATTHEW 25:10, NKJV

When God created us, He gave us the ability to choose. Because God wanted lovers, not robots, we have been created with a will to make choices. Not only did God want lovers, He also wanted a partner—a partner that would exercise His authority upon the earth. In fact, in God’s dealings with the earth, He only works through His Body. The kingdom of heaven only comes to earth when we pray (Matt. 6:10). Therefore our choices matter.

We are called into a partnership with God. Many of us fall out of balance with this concept. Some believe that God will do everything, and as a result, become lazy and apathetic. Others believe that they must do everything—these fall into legalism and burnout. The truth is that we have been called to labor together with God. We have a part and God has a part.

When John the Apostle received a revelation of Jesus, he was shown the Bride. John wrote, “His wife has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). The Lord does not make us ready—we make ourselves ready. In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said, “Those who were ready went in with Him to the wed-

ding; and the door was shut.” If we do not make ourselves ready, then the door to the wedding will be shut on us also. Now is the time to make ourselves ready!

How do we make ourselves ready? We begin by waiting upon the Lord in prayer and worship. Jesus concluded the parable of the ten virgins saying, “Watch therefore.” Learning to wait upon the Holy Spirit in prayer, worship, and meditation upon the Word is how we begin to make ourselves ready. As we start down this path, we must realize that we cannot change ourselves—only God can change us. We must rely on God’s grace and guard ourselves from both from laziness and legalism. Our responsibility is to be respond-able: We must respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

DAY 50

INTIMACY WITH THE LORD

*But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you,
I do not know you."*

MATTHEW 25:12, NKJV

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus declared the purpose of man's existence: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to experience eternal life. Eternal life begins now. It is an eternal journey of discovering the infinite beauty of the Lord.

Many Christians waste precious time laboring for God, studying former moves of God, and even studying about God—without knowing God intimately. Jesus pointed this out when He told the most knowledgeable men of His day, the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40). True life does not come from the Word of God, but by fellowship with the God of the Word. True life is in Jesus.

When the foolish virgins desired to come into the wedding, Jesus said to them, "I do not know you." The foolish

virgins had exchanged an intimate relationship with Jesus for other things—most likely good things, such as a ministry, family, or career. The foolish virgins did not make knowing God their number one priority.

In the same way a marriage is destroyed by a lack of intimacy, those who do not pursue intimacy with God will suffer loss throughout eternity. The foolish virgins did not have an intimate relationship with the Lord, and as a result, were denied entrance into the wedding.

Let us forsake some of the temporary, earthly pleasures that fill our hearts and enter into the eternal pleasure of knowing God. Let us shun the sensuous wine of Babylon that corrupts and drink from the river of God's delights. Let us determine to press into the knowledge of God.

DAY 51

DEVELOPING PASSION FOR JESUS

*But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you,
I do not know you."*

MATTHEW 25:12, NKJV

The night before His crucifixion, as Jesus prayed, He expressed the deep desires of His heart to the Father. This prayer is recorded in John 17. Known as the High Priestly Prayer, John 17 records the most passionate yearnings in Jesus' heart. As Jesus reaches the end of His prayer, He meditates upon eternity past. He remembers the passion and pleasure that the Father has for Him. He recalls the unbroken communion and the deep expressions of love that were exchanged between Him and the Father. As He meditates upon this time, the Lord's heart begins to burn with desire and He cries out to His Father, "I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:24-26).

Jesus prayed that the same love the Father has for Him would be in His people, His Bride. Before the Lord returns, this prayer request will be answered. Jesus will have a Bride that loves Him just like His Father. Though today's Church has been lulled into a deep sleep, it will not end that way. The Father will answer Jesus' prayer. He will give Jesus a Bride

who will love Him with the same love the Father has for Him.

The foolish virgins are those who did not love Jesus first. We can be saved and lose our first love. Paul told the Corinthians, “If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him” (1 Cor. 8:3). This verse parallels what Jesus told the foolish virgins when He said, “I do not know You.” Because the foolish virgins did not make God their all-consuming passion, Jesus did not know them intimately. However, the opposite is also true. When we love God with all of our being, we are known by Jesus in an intimate way. Therefore, let us love Jesus with passion and press on to know Him more.

KNOWING JESUS INTIMATELY

*But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you,
I do not know you."*

MATTHEW 25:12, NKJV

The Prophet Hosea declared, "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD" (Hos. 6:1-3). In this hour, there is a cry from God's heart for His people to "press on to know the Lord." Knowing the Lord does not come through intellectual study, but by a contrite heart that hungers for God alone.

Knowing God begins as we humble ourselves before God and ask for a revelation of Jesus Christ. If we pray Paul's great apostolic prayer in Ephesians 1:17-18, we will come to know Jesus more intimately. Paul prayed, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17).

In order for us to know Jesus intimately, the Holy Spirit must reveal Him to us. Many Christians have a knowledge of Christ that is strongly influenced by their culture, their past,

and their own perceptions. All of these will lead us astray. We must have the knowledge of Christ that is imparted by the “spirit of wisdom and revelation.” In order to know Christ as He truly is, the Holy Spirit must open the eyes of our hearts and shine revelatory light upon us.

In all of your pursuits, make knowing God intimately your highest priority. Do not let ministry or service or a relationship hinder you from the invaluable treasure of knowing Christ. Run after God with everything in your heart.

The wise virgins possessed a treasure that the foolish virgins lacked—they knew the Bridegroom intimately. Jesus told the foolish, “I do not know You.” An omniscient God knows everything and everybody. However, only those who truly love Jesus are known by Him in an intimate way. Don’t squander your precious inheritance through a passive and lazy pursuit of Christ. Press on to know the Lord intimately. He is the greatest treasure.

THE WATCH OF THE LORD

*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour
in which the Son of Man is coming.*

MATTHEW 25:13, NKJV

Jesus said that the end-time Church will be just like a betrothed bride that is waiting for her bridegroom to take her to the wedding. The issue that we must address is how are we waiting. The foolish virgins did not use wisdom during the Bridegroom's delay. Instead of waiting for Him with expectancy, hunger, passion, and alertness, they forfeited the opportunity to go through the door into the wedding. May God help us become wise virgins! As we wait for the Lord's return, let's live wisely.

Jesus concluded the parable of the ten virgins with this exhortation: "Watch therefore." It is important that we learn how to watch. If we neglect this warning, we could squander our inheritance like the foolish virgins.

So what does it mean to watch? Watching is keeping our spirit alert and hungry for the presence of the Holy Spirit. Watching involves focusing our heart upon Jesus and not allowing ourselves to be entangled with passivity, apathy, complacency, or indifference.

A clear description of how we are to watch is found in

Psalm 130:6: “My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning—yes, more than those who watch for the morning.” This psalmist was so desperate for God that he waited upon the Lord more intensely than a watchman waited for the morning. During the times of the Bible, watchmen had to keep awake through the night. These watchmen were often tempted to fall asleep. Therefore, they eagerly desired the morning to arrive. By God's grace, let us desire the presence of God with this type of hunger.

Watching is a major part of prayer. Jesus told the disciples to “watch and pray.” During prayer, we watch by remaining alert, active, and focused. Watching involves fighting off passivity, apathy, slumber, and laziness as we wait for God to speak. Watching keeps our spirit ready to receive from God as we rest in His presence.

Spend some time today waiting on the Lord to speak to you. As you hear His voice, your inner man will be renewed and you will be filled with great joy. Like John the Baptist, may our greatest joy be hearing the Bridegroom's voice.

