

The ten virgins



Matthew 25:1–13

The Lord Jesus prepared his disciples for the future. They were to get ready for his return and watchfully and patiently await him. He told them a parable to illustrate this: "Ten virgins awaited the bridegroom with their lamps burning. But he came later than expected and they fell asleep. When they were eventually awakened by the call: 'The bridegroom is coming!', five of the virgins found that their lamps had run out of oil. Because they had omitted to get extra oil for their lamps, they could not enter the wedding banquet. The remaining five had acted wisely in taking extra oil. They were prepared for the feast and could therefore partake in it."

The children learn how important it is to prepare for the return of Jesus Christ.

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he Lord Jesus teaches his disciples in word and deed. He does not want to leave them in the dark concerning the future as they are to continue proclaiming the gospel after his return to his heavenly Father. He patiently explains to them what the loving God has planned. Concerning this he says to them: "I must suffer and die, but I will arise and return to my Father in heaven. You must not be sad, I will come back and take all those who are prepared with me. Be watchful, no one knows when this day will be. Always be ready."

The disciples listen pensively. They want to do everything to comply with their Master's will. Their faces are radiant. But the Lord is worried. Right now they are full of confidence. They think that it is easy to wait for his return. But what will happen when they are alone? The Lord Jesus wants to warn them so that they will wait patiently and prepare themselves wisely even if his return is a long way off. He illustrates to them what will happen when God completes his work and when his Son returns. He does so by relating the following parable: "Ten girls set off with their lamps. As bridesmaids they are

wearing their most beautiful garments. Five have extra flasks of oil with them. All ten of them are happy that they may accompany the bridegroom the last stretch of the way to the wedding banquet and partake in it. They await him by the side of the road entering the village. Their lamps are burning brightly in the twilight. They keep looking out for him. He and his companions should soon be coming. Before long twilight changes into night. But the lamps are still burning brightly and their light provides security and sets a festive mood. The girls wait patiently, but no one comes. Eventually they become tired and sit down. What could be keeping the bridegroom so long? They put down their lamps and fall asleep."

"I know what happened," says John, "everyone who sees the procession passing wants to congratulate the bridegroom and hand him a present. This may cause considerable delay. But it is worthwhile waiting for him because a wedding feast lasts for days. Everyone contributes something, so that it becomes a wonderful feast. Oh, I wouldn't mind taking part in such a feast once again."

But as the story is not finished yet, the Lord Jesus continues: "The flames in the lamps become smaller and smaller. The oil is almost used up. It is about midnight and the virgins are as-

leep in the grass, when suddenly they are awakened. Music re-sounds and the light of flickering torches shines through the darkness. The bridesmaids hear the call: 'The bridegroom comes! Come and meet him!' They quickly get up, straighten their clothes and grab their lamps. Now it is seen that not all have prepared properly for the feast. Five have acted wisely and have brought extra oil. Soon their lamps are burning brightly again. In this radiant light they are ready to receive the bridegroom. The remaining five no longer have light. It is impossible for them to share in the feast without it. They ask the wise maidens: 'Please give us some of your oil!' But the wise ones answer: 'No, for then there will not be enough for you and for us. Go to the vendors and buy some.' It so happens that only five girls are ready when the bridegroom comes. They enter the wedding banquet with him. The door is shut after the last guests have entered. Meanwhile the five foolish

girls are hurrying through the night in search of oil. They arrive at the banquet too late. They knock on the door and call out: 'Lord, open to us!' But the bridegroom turns them away. He says: 'I do not know you.'

Shocked, the disciples look at one another. They realize that it will not be as easy as they have imagined to await the Lord's return. Much patience is needed and the danger exists that everyone may become tired. The most important thing is to remain watchful, to prepare wisely for this day and to have enough oil. They have understood that their faith and their knowledge should shine as a light in their hearts. This light must shine brightly when the Lord Jesus returns.

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The Lord Jesus related to his disciples: "Ten girls are waiting for the bridegroom. His coming is delayed. Five of the girls are wise: when the bridegroom comes, their lamps are burning because they have an extra flask of oil with them. They are invited to the feast. The other five do not have enough oil. They have not prepared properly and are not admitted to the banquet."

We must prepare ourselves properly for the return of Jesus Christ, the bridegroom of our soul.

- 1 We discuss the picture with the children. We compare: the bridegroom is the Lord Jesus. / The ten girls are the faithful who are aware of his coming and are waiting for him. We belong to these as well. / The five wise ones are those who have prepared themselves properly. / The oil is everything wrought by the Spirit of God: we gather God's word. The children try to retell the parable.**
- 2 How can we prepare ourselves for the return of Christ? (Love, hope, zealously and the joyful expectation of the return of Jesus Christ should shine in our hearts / practise love / keep the commandments / overcome / pray that we may be ready and worthy ...) In this way we can gather oil and the Lord will bless us.**