

Matthew 25:1-13

The Challenge of Discipleship Study 10: *Readiness*

Focus Question: *How do we get ready for an event at an unknown time and place?*

Word of Life

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” Matthew 25:13

Read [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

The parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids is found only in Matthew’s Gospel. The parable is placed in the middle of Jesus’ teaching about the end times ([24:1 -- 25:46](#)). Jesus is speaking to his disciples while sitting on the Mount of Olives, looking at the Temple grounds ([24:1-3](#)). The disciples come to Jesus privately ([24:3](#)) to ask Jesus about the signs of the end of the age. Jesus uses several analogies to stress the need to live faithfully and expectantly, to watch and remain ready.

The image in this parable of the bridegroom is found in both the Old and New Testaments to describe the covenantal relationship between God and God’s people. (See [Hosea 2:14-23](#); [Isaiah 62:5](#); [Revelation 22:17](#)). A typical ritual at a wedding would have the bridegroom coming with his companions to the house of the bride’s parents to take her to his own home. As the groom approaches, the bridesmaids would come out with lighted lamps and meet him.

1. *How helpful or meaningful is the image of bride and bridegroom to describe the relationship between God and people?*

In contrast this with other “kingdom” parables in Matthew ([Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47](#)) which begin in the present: “The kingdom of heaven is like. . . .” This parable begins with the word “then”. This, and the tense of the verb, imply something that will happen in the future. While the parables in Matthew 13 emphasize the mystery of the kingdom already present in the world, the future tense of the parable of the bridesmaids points to a time when the presence of the kingdom will be clearly seen and understood.

2. *What are the characteristics of a faithful disciple who waits and prepares for Christ’s coming?*
3. *What does it mean to live a life of active faithfulness?*

The challenging question for the church of Matthew’s day (and for the church today) is: How are we to live during the “in-between” time – the time between the coming of the kingdom of heaven in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the promised return of the victorious Christ at the end of the age? Do we trust in One whose presence is not readily seen? The answer Jesus speaks in Matthew’s Gospel is to live a life of active faithfulness, of *doing* what we *believe*.

1. *How do you face the challenge of waiting for Christ?*
2. *What distracts you from your waiting?*
3. *How do you prepare as you wait for Christ?*
4. *How do you face the challenge of being ready for Christ to return?*

Prayer

Christ, calm our impatient hearts as we wait for your return.

Dig Deeper

[Revelation 22:17](#)

Last Word

This week,
be still and wait upon the Lord,
listening,
being ready to hear.