

Matthew 25:1-30 During the delay



Two parables, but not stand-alone. Remember that this also follows Jesus' thoroughgoing denunciation of the Pharisees, just days before the cross – which may be relevant if the Pharisees are seen as representative of the five foolish bridesmaids, apparently ready for the Messiah, but tragically *not* ready, when push comes to shove.

But what is Jesus saying “watching” really is? What does “being ready” for the coming of the Son of man really look like? Studying Bible prophecy, or something more practical (as well)?

And notice the theme of *delay* in both of these parables, backing up the hint of 24:48. Why would Jesus delay in returning? See, for example, 2 Peter 3-10.

➤ The bridesmaids: be ready! (1-13)

We need to know something of the wedding festivities of Jesus' day to make more sense of this. Notice the absence of the bride in this story – not necessary to the point Jesus is trying to make here. Remember this is only a parable!

For “lamps”, probably think more in terms of torches, which could be prepared in advance in a “part-baked” form, but needing a final dousing with oil to give them the necessary staying power.

So what counts as being “ready” in our situation? Theological interest (or obsession!), or something more practical?

Do you see the Pharisees as being “unready”, in this sense?

➤ The stewards: be busy! (14-30)

The standard story format: three characters, with number three providing the sting in the tail. What surprises you about this third servant?

And what surprises you about the master's response? Several answers possible!

So what, as responsible people entrusted with the master's goods, should we be busy about in our situation? Why would this not be a distraction from from “watching”?

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