

Jesus is Coming Back

Stories Jesus Told: Part 4

Discussion Questions

1. What internal emotions—such as hope, anxiety, confusion, or indifference—does the topic of Jesus' return stir up in you?
2. Why do you think every generation is so deeply fascinated with trying to predict the exact timeline of the end times?
3. How can we guard ourselves against becoming consumed by end-times speculation while still maintaining a genuine, healthy expectancy for Christ's return?
4. In our modern lives, what does spiritual "drowsiness" or fatigue look like? How can you distinguish between healthy, God-given rest and a dangerous state of being spiritually unprepared for life's delays?
5. Why is it so easy for people who grew up in the church, have Christian parents, or are surrounded by Christian friends to mistake a "borrowed" faith for a personal relationship with Jesus? If someone asked you to share *your* personal faith story apart from your family or heritage, what would you say?
6. When you look at current world events—such as wars, political turmoil, or cultural confusion—does your heart lean more toward panic or toward Christ's promises? What is one practical way you can use the truth of Christ's return to steady your anxieties this week?
7. What are the primary cultural distractions or worldly cares currently competing for your focus and dulling your devotion to God? What is one tangible boundary you can establish in your daily routine to stay focused on eternity?
8. In what area of your life right now do you feel like you are stuck in a long, difficult season of waiting? How can you shift your mindset from "passive waiting" (complaining or doing nothing) to "active patience" (steady, quiet faithfulness over time)?
9. Taking a moment for honest self-examination: Is there any specific area of your life, a recurring sin, or an act of delayed obedience where you would feel ashamed if Jesus returned today? What step of repentance or restoration do you need to take with the Lord today to clear that away?
10. Who has God intentionally placed in your circle of influence—among your family, friends, coworkers, or neighbors—who does not know Jesus personally? What is one practical way you can share your story or invite them into a life-giving conversation this week?

Summary

Do you believe that Jesus is coming back soon?

It is a key question that many of us face today. Given the current state of world events and the overall craziness of our times, we naturally wonder about the timing of Christ's return. However, while this is a deeply relevant question, it is certainly not a new one.

The Unknowable Day and Hour

In Matthew chapter 24, Jesus' own disciples pressed Him with the very same question, asking when He would return and establish His kingdom. Jesus responded with absolute clarity:

"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." — Matthew 24:36

Despite these explicit words, virtually every generation has featured people who were utterly convinced they had decoded the timeline. For instance, back in 1988, a book gained massive popularity titled *88 Reasons Why Jesus Will Return in 1988*. When 1988 came and went without the Second Coming, the author simply released a follow-up book indicating a miscalculation, titled *89 Reasons Why Jesus Will Return in 1989*.

Unsurprisingly, sales plummeted, and 1989 passed just like the year before.

Every few years, new predictions spread across social media, books, and videos, yet every single one of them has been wrong. We cannot know the exact day or hour.

However, while Jesus explicitly states we cannot know the *when*, He repeatedly commands us to expect His arrival. He warns that His return will be sudden and unexpected, comparing it to the days of Noah. In those days, people were going about their normal routines—eating, drinking, marrying, and building—until the flood suddenly came. Jesus notes that life will seem entirely normal right up until the moment it isn't.

Two men will be working in a field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.

Jesus reinforces this with a brief parable about a homeowner. If the owner of a house knew exactly what time a thief was coming, he would stay awake and protect his home. Therefore, Jesus tells us to keep watch and remain ready at an hour we do not expect Him.

But what if His return takes longer than we anticipate? How are we supposed to live if Christ's return seems delayed? To answer this, Jesus provides a powerful illustration in Matthew 25:1–13, traditionally known as the Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids (or the

Parable of the Virgins).

Understanding the First-Century Wedding

To fully grasp the tension of Jesus' parable, it helps to understand the distinct phases of a first-century Jewish wedding, which look very different from modern traditions. A typical wedding unfolded in three specific stages:

1. **The Promise of Marriage:** This functioned much like an engagement, but it was heavily arranged by the parents, particularly the fathers.
2. **The Betrothal:** This was a formal ceremony where vows were legally exchanged. Though the couple did not yet live together or consummate the marriage, they were legally bound. This covenant could only be broken by a formal divorce. This historical context explains why Joseph intended to divorce Mary quietly when he discovered she was pregnant during their betrothal period.
3. **The Wedding Celebration:** Following the betrothal, the groom would return to his father's house to build a new place for his bride, often adding an extra room onto the family home. This preparation phase could last up to a year while the groom worked and saved money. Once the addition was complete, word would spread that the celebration was ready to begin.

The groom would then travel to the bride's home for initial festivities, followed by a joyful nighttime procession through the town toward the groom's home for the grand wedding feast. Townsfolk would pour into the streets to congratulate the couple, shouting, "Here comes the bridegroom!"

The Crisis of the Missing Oil

This nighttime parade is where the ten bridesmaids enter the parable. As young, unmarried friends or relatives of the bride, their job was to stand ready with oil lamps—or more accurately, torches—to escort the bridal party through the dark streets.

In the story, however, the bridegroom is significantly delayed. As evening turns to midnight, all ten bridesmaids grow drowsy and fall asleep.

It is vital to notice that falling asleep is not the issue or the point of tension in the parable. It was late, and a delay is understandable. The true problem was that **five of the bridesmaids were completely unprepared for the delay** because they failed to bring extra oil.

To put it in modern terms: five of them had their phones fully charged with backup power banks ready, while the other five let their batteries drain to zero with no backup plan in sight.

At midnight, the shout rings out: *"Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"* All ten wake up to trim their torches, but the five foolish bridesmaids realize their flames are dying. They beg the wise ones for oil, but the wise decline, knowing that sharing will leave everyone in the dark. The foolish bridesmaids are forced to scramble into town in the middle of the night to find an open shop.

While they are away, the groom arrives. The five prepared bridesmaids join the procession, enter the wedding banquet, and **the door is shut**. When the foolish bridesmaids finally return and knock, crying out, *"Lord, Lord, open the door for us!"* the groom delivers a sobering response: *"Truly I tell you, I don't know you."* What they assumed they could procrastinate and fix later was permanently lost.

Three Key Takeaways for Today

Jesus concludes the parable with a direct command: *"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."* Based on this teaching, there are three vital principles for how we can watch and wait wisely today.

1. You Need a Personal Faith, Not a Borrowed Faith

When the foolish bridesmaids realized they were empty, they tried to borrow oil from the wise. Jesus is not teaching selfishness or a lack of generosity here; rather, He is highlighting that **saving faith cannot be borrowed**.

While we can be deeply encouraged and blessed by the faith of others, your relationship with Jesus must be your own. Many people today rely on a "proxy" faith, assuming they are secure because they have Christian parents, grew up in church, have a believing spouse, or used to attend services with their grandmother. None of these blessings are substitutes for personal faith. One day, we will each stand before Jesus individually, and the question will not be who you were surrounded by, but whether *you* personally trusted Him as Lord.

2. We Must Actively Wait for His Return

The New Testament letters consistently teach that waiting for Jesus is not a passive activity. We are not called to obsess over date-predictions or end-times speculation, but to live out an active faith characterized by five distinct traits:

- **Wait with Hope:** Titus 2:13 calls us to look forward to our "blessed hope." Biblical hope is not wishful thinking; it is a confident expectation. Political turmoil, cultural confusion, wars, and earthquakes should not panic us, because Jesus told us they would happen. Our hope steadies us because we know who holds tomorrow.
- **Wait with Alertness:** Paul warns believers to "keep awake and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6). To be sober means to be spiritually alert and clear-minded. The opposite is spiritual drunkenness—becoming so distracted by the anxieties and cares of this world that our devotion to Christ becomes dull.
- **Wait with Perseverance:** The Christian life involves trials, disappointments, and potential ridicule. The book of Hebrews exhorts us to hold fast to our confidence and not throw it away. We must endure and keep trusting Him even when life is heavy and difficult.
- **Wait with Patience:** James 5:7–8 compares our waiting to a farmer awaiting a valuable crop. The farmer cannot force the harvest to arrive faster, but he never stops working. True patience is steady, daily faithfulness over time.
- **Wait by Abiding in Christ:** 1 John 2:28 tells us to "continue in him" so that we may be confident and unashamed at His coming. This means walking closely with the Lord through prayer, scripture, and consistent obedience. It forces us to ask: *Is there any area of my life right now that would cause me shame if Jesus returned today?*

3. Respond to Jesus' Words with Direct Urgency

The five foolish bridesmaids operated under the dangerous assumption that they had plenty of time. It is the exact same assumption people make today when they say, "I'll get serious about my faith later," or "I'll follow Jesus once things slow down."

Jesus warns us because He loves us. Life is incredibly short, and His arrival will be completely sudden. If you have not yet placed your faith in Jesus, there is an immense urgency to admit your need, believe in Him, and confess Him as Lord today.

For those who are already followers of Jesus, this urgency should drive our daily choices. It should make us highly sensitive to whatever step of obedience God is calling us to next—whether that means believer's baptism, intentional repentance from a recurring sin, or deeper engagement within the local church. Furthermore, it should

break our hearts for the people in our immediate circles of influence—our family, neighbors, coworkers, and classmates. We must actively pray for them, share the story of what Jesus has done in our lives, and boldly extend the hope of the gospel.

As the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:15–16:

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil."

Let us live with expectation, making the absolute most of every single opportunity to help others find and follow Jesus until He returns.