

AUGUST 17, 2025

SERIES 3: LAST THINGS

HERE COMES THE BRIDEGROOM

LESSON 3.3

FOCUS VERSE

Matthew 25:13

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

LESSON TEXT

Matthew 25:1–13; I Thessalonians 4:13–18; II Peter 3:3–4

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

Jesus is coming soon.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will live with expectation for Jesus' soon coming.

Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Lesson Text and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: If you have ever missed a bus, flight, or appointment, what did it feel like?

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection.

I. THE QUESTION AND ANSWER

A. Skeptics Will Question the Truth of Jesus' Return

» *When did you first hear about the Rapture? What are your thoughts about it now?*

B. Jesus Is Returning for His Church, No Matter How Many People Question His Coming

» *How are you encouraged when you realize you do not have to be in the majority to be obedient to God?*

C. I Will Listen to Jesus Rather Than the Skeptics

II. THE PARABLE OF THE BRIDESMAIDS

A. The Bridesmaids Did Not Know When the Bridegroom Was Returning (V)

» *How does living in a different culture affect the way we view these Bible stories?*

B. Five Bridesmaids Were Ready; Five Were Not (I)

» *How do we live expectantly for Jesus' return?*

C. I Will Live with Expectation for Jesus' Soon Coming

» *How many sermons and lessons do you think you've heard in your life? If you are not ready, what more do you think you will need to be ready?*

Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us not be discouraged by skeptics
- For God to help us live every day looking for His return in joyous expectation

LESSON CONNECTION

The sun was bright in the sky that day. It was late June, and all the children were out of school for another month. Rachel and Peter decided they would take their kids to the park later in the day once they successfully completed their errands. When the four children heard the news, they were ecstatic. However, their parents added a caveat: before they could go to the park for all the fun they had been promised, they must complete a few small tasks. Weekly housework chores needed to be completed today while their parents were away finishing their errands.

Soon after the parents left, the four children set off to work on their chores, rushing to make sure they completed them all to receive their reward. However, after about twenty minutes of diligent work, two of the children decided they would begin playing; after all, their parents would still be gone for another hour. How could they not be done by then? The two other children finished their housework and then began to play with the others.

As they played, they forgot to check the clock and be ready when their parents returned. When Rachel and Peter arrived home later, the children saw them pulling in. The two children who had not completed their chores pleaded with the others, “Hurry, help us finish our work so we all can go to the park together.” But it was too late.

When their parents walked into the house ready to take their children to the park, they were disappointed to find only half of the housework had been done. Why had only half been done? After discussing this situation with their children, they discovered two of them had simply decided to put off what needed to be done today. The parents agreed that Rachel would take the two children who had completed their work to the park now, and Peter would bring the other two later when they finished their housework.

In this story, despite their actions and lack of planning ahead, all the children went to the park. In the lesson today, however, the end of the story for half of the bridesmaids was not as bright. When the groom arrived, he announced: “Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matthew 25:12). They were left outside of the wedding feast because they were not ready for the bridegroom’s return.

When dealing with the approaching Bridegroom, there are no take backs. We must live our lives expectantly, or unfortunately we will be lost. We must look toward the day of Jesus’ return with longing and preparedness, for no one knows the time of the Bridegroom’s coming. Let us live our lives looking for the return of Christ so we may be among the wise and enter the Marriage Supper with our Bridegroom.

BIBLE LESSON

I. THE QUESTION AND ANSWER

The church is constantly asking, “When is Jesus coming back?” But the world is asking, “Is Jesus coming back?” Skeptics have asked this second question for nearly two thousand years, even right after Jesus’ resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. At the end of the Gospels, Jesus promised He would return again once He was taken up into Heaven. We can trust His promise, even after two thousand years of watching for Him and sadly watching people abandon their faith. Rather than be discouraged, we should be excited that we are closer to the Rapture than we have ever been.

A. Skeptics Will Question the Truth of Jesus' Return

Perhaps you have heard it said, "All my life I have heard Jesus is coming back soon. My grandfather heard the same thing. I don't believe Jesus is coming back at all." This doubtful belief is not new. It lived in the apostles' day, for we read in II Peter 3:3–4: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Peter 3:3–4).

This misunderstanding of God's timing leads to a lack of faith and can lead to some Christians abandoning their faith altogether. Those who dismiss the hope of Jesus' return often lose hope. Yet other skeptics question when Jesus will return. Many are confident in their beliefs and tenaciously cling to them, even when Scripture points in another way. We may liken their views to the Pharisees and Sadducees in the Gospels. They asked Jesus for a sign that His prophecies would come to pass. Jesus offered faith that all would work out the way they were promised and hope for the future, but they did not believe.

When did you first hear about the Rapture? What are your thoughts about it now?

Note the language Peter used in this passage of Scripture. He stated: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (II Peter 3:3). His use of the word *shall* serves as proof scoffers will come. Peter knew that no matter how much proof or how many signs they saw, some would not accept that Jesus is coming back. Their minds are made up.

But there is hope within this passage. Even when those around us may not believe in the return of Christ, it is still a promise of God, and we can rely on the promises of God to come true. For Peter wrote in the same chapter: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). God will keep His word.

B. Jesus Is Returning for His Church, No Matter How Many People Question His Coming

The promise of Jesus' return is peppered throughout Scripture. But even if Jesus only once promised He was coming back for His church, He will come back. Our hope as children of God hinges on this blessed hope. Consider the pattern we see in the Word of God. Some estimate a million people were alive in Noah's day, but only he and his family of eight were saved. He preached that a flood was coming, and it came just as God promised.

The Old Testament prophets were in the minority compared to their audience and the other prophets who promised peace and prosperity, even amid Israel's rampant sin. But God brought the nations of Assyria and Babylon against Israel and Judah respectively because He promised to judge sin, no matter how many people disbelieved or disagreed.

Past promises fulfilled are simply fuel for faith that God will fulfill future promises. Paul wrote it right concerning Abraham: "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20–21).

How are you encouraged when you realize you do not have to be in the majority to be obedient to God?

C. I Will Listen to Jesus Rather Than the Skeptics

The siren song of our world is everywhere. Whether the world is telling us to "eat, drink, and be merry," or they are arguing with us that Jesus was not real or is not really coming, we hear the melancholy chords of their song. However, as children of God, we do not have to sing their song. We sing the song of the redeemed. And one day, after Jesus returns for His church, we will gather around the throne with people from every kindred, tongue, and nation; and we will together sing, never again to listen to the discouraging lyrics of the skeptics' song.

II. THE PARABLE OF THE BRIDESMAIDS

Since only Jesus knows the day and hour He is returning, He gave us several stories to help us live while we wait and watch. This parable in Matthew 25 is such a story. In the passage, ten bridesmaids were awaiting the bridegroom's return for his bride so they could all go into the wedding celebration together.

A. The Bridesmaids Did Not Know When the Bridegroom Was Returning

Hearing this story is foreign to our culture. We know the day and even time for our weddings in Western culture. The wedding party sends invitations, we RSVP (sometimes), we save the date, and we set reminders on our phone so we do not miss the date. However, in the ancient Near East, neither the bride nor her party knew when the groom was returning for her.

After he negotiated the price he would be willing to pay for the right to marry her, he returned to his father's house to prepare a place for his new bride and him to live to start their own family. Only after he finished building their home, he laid down the hammer and came back for his bride. The parallels to Jesus' return for us are seen all over the ancient Jewish wedding custom. Jesus paid the price to purchase us as His bride with His precious blood. (See I Peter 1:19.)

Jesus promised His disciples: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2–3). Although the bridesmaids were in the wedding party, neither they nor the bride knew when the bridegroom was coming back.

That is why Jesus called us to "watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13). The church has held its breath for nearly two thousand years, waiting for Jesus to come, and some have gotten tired of waiting. Some have fallen asleep or become complacent. We must live every day as if this day is that day when our Bridegroom returns. For one day, this day will indeed be that day.

Teacher Option: *A supplemental video is available in the Resource Kit. (V)*

How does living in a different culture affect the way we view these Bible stories?

B. Five Bridesmaids Were Ready; Five Were Not

Five of the bridesmaids were considered wise and five were considered foolish. They were separated, not by education or economy but by preparation. The five wise brought extra fuel for their oil lamps in case the needle danced dangerously close to E (for empty). However, the foolish only brought the oil in their lamps. If the bridegroom delayed even a little, they would not have enough fuel to keep their lamps lit for the evening wedding.

In Jesus' story, all ten of the bridesmaids fell asleep while they waited. They were quite similar: they were likely dressed alike, they were all invited by the bridal family, and they all fell asleep. The tragedy of Jesus' story is five bridesmaids ran out of time after they had so much time to get ready. They were frantic. They jolted awake and scrambled to light their lamps. They had watched and waited for this day for months, maybe years, and this day was finally that day, but they were not ready.

How do we know we are living expectantly for Jesus' return?

These five ran to the market in search of a merchant open at midnight. But while they were there, they missed the bridegroom's arrival. He came into their city, called those who were ready, left those who were not, and went into the wedding. When the five foolish returned, it was too late. They ran out of time after they had so much time.

They banged on the door and begged the bridegroom to let them in, but he would not open the door. It was not because He was unkind or because they were wicked, but just because they were not ready. Jesus' parable sent chills into His audience because there will come a day when people have waited too long or wasted too much time, and they are not ready for the coming of the Lord.

The poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote after the tenor of this parable:

Teacher Option: *A supplemental image is available in the Resource Kit. (1)*

Late, late, so late! And dark the night and chill.

Late, late, so late! But we can enter still.

Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

No light had we: for this we do repent.

And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.

Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

No light: so late! And dark and chill the night.

let us in that we may find the light!

Too late, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?

let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!

No, no, too late! Ye cannot enter now.

How many sermons and lessons do you think you've heard in your life? If you are not ready, what more do you think you will need to be ready?

C. I Will Live with Expectation for Jesus' Soon Coming

Typically, we are referred to as the bride in this metaphor, but in order to show the difference between those who would be ready and those who would not, Jesus compared us to bridesmaids. There will always be two kinds of bridesmaids in life, even in church. We cannot let those who live unprepared keep us from being ready for Jesus' return. We want everyone to be saved, but we cannot make anyone ready except ourselves. Live expecting Jesus' return. He is coming back.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Jeremy woke up once again to his average life. He and his twin brother, James, lived similar lives. They both loved their families and both worked in roughly the same field. They were both raised in church by good parents. Yet even with living similar lives and having grown up with similar backgrounds, they had veered in different directions. On this day, which seemed as normal as any other day, something would happen to make it the most special day of Jeremy's life.

During lunch break Jeremy headed to a restaurant to eat with his brother, James. They had not seen each other in a while due to the busyness of life. Jeremy walked in to find James seated close to the back corner. After sitting down and exchanging pleasantries, they ordered. "I think it's time we talk about it, James." But his answer was curt, "What's there to talk about?" Jeremy studied his brother's face, looking to catch his mood before answering. "You should really come back to church, James. We miss you there, and we're worried about you."

James took a sip of water. "Ah, that." James displayed a level of nonchalance that displeased Jeremy. "James, this is serious." James replied, "I know man, I know. I'm just not quite ready yet." Jeremy knew James had a lot of baggage, but this conversation still needed to happen. "I'm sorry about everything that happened, but you cannot hold it against everyone. It was some individuals at the church, but not the church itself. And it certainly wasn't Jesus."

“Hey, I said I know. I’m just not quite ready to go back yet. I haven’t forgiven those who did that to me, and I know you already have forgiven them and they’re back in the church now.”

“That is the nature of forgiveness,” Jeremy stated. James was beginning to get upset. “Yep, and that’s exactly why I haven’t forgiven them. I don’t want to see them again. But—”

Before Jeremy could finish his sentence, there was a loud noise. It sounded like a trumpet, or perhaps a shout. Maybe both. Jeremy was gone. He had been watching and praying for this moment his whole life, spending his time in prayer and reading the Scriptures. He had witnessed to those around him. But James had a different experience in that moment. It seemed as if the world had gotten darker and colder. He looked across the table to see his brother’s reaction to the sound, only to find his brother was gone.

One day this day will be that day. It will be that sudden and it will be that final. That is why we must live ready. We do not know the time when Jesus will come back for His people. Do not let your heart be hardened by anyone or anything. Jesus is coming. Let us be ready.

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us not be discouraged by skeptics
- For God to help us live every day looking for His return in joyous expectation