

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

**Matthew 24:9-14(NLT)** <sup>9</sup>“Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. <sup>10</sup>And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. <sup>11</sup>And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. <sup>12</sup>Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>14</sup>And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come.

Please repeat this phrase out loud with me. “Jesus is coming again.” In Thessalonians 4 we read this. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-18(NLT)** <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the Christians who have died will rise from their graves. <sup>17</sup>Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>So encourage each other with these words.

On the Lord’s Day we will all be caught up in the air to be with the Lord forever. On that day you will receive a brand-new glorified body that will never die. You will be with the Lord forever. All will be right. All will be well. All will be perfect. That sick feeling inside of you that something is terribly wrong will be no more for all sin, evil, death, and the demonic realm will be gone from us, to terrorize us no more. It will be replaced with the greatest of joys, the greatest of peace, and the abundance of love that only God can give. When you hear the commanding shout of the arch angel, when you hear the trumpet sound, when you are caught up in the air, everything you experienced on this earth, all of it, the good, the bad, and the ugly will have been worth it all. Please be encouraged by these words. God has never lost a battle yet nor will he ever. God is always true to his word for God is incapable of lying. It may look like things are completely out of control today, but the day will come, and you will see who was and is absolutely in control. It is the Lord God Almighty, creator and maker of heaven and earth and creator and maker of the new heaven and the new earth. Yes, Jesus is coming again. (Put hand in air and have people say that every time I put my hand in the air).

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, Jesus told the disciples that after he left, meaning after he ascended into heaven, he would prepare a place for them. Reading out of Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase in John chapter 14, <sup>2</sup>“There is plenty of room for you in my Father’s home. If that weren’t so, would I have told you that I’m on my way to get a room ready for you? <sup>3</sup>And if I’m on my way to get your room ready, I’ll come back and get you so you can live where I live.”

The Bible uses imagery from time to time in order for us to understand God’s truth. In the Bible Jesus is called the Groom. Guess who the bride is? The church, every true believer in Jesus Christ. The Groom gave his life for his bride, for you and for me. We are the Groom’s beloved. During the days of Jesus on earth there was a particular way for marriages to take place. The engagement took place and was often set up by the parents. Engagements in those days were almost as binding as a marriage. To break an engagement in those days is what we call a divorce today. The engagement would last a period of time. Once engaged, the groom to be would prepare, build, construct, make a place for the bride and groom to live together. They did not live together until after the wedding. Sometimes the length of the engagement depended on how quickly he could build a place for them to live. And often where they lived was an attachment to the home he grew up in. The bride had to be ready at any moment for the

call of the groom to come and join in the wedding ceremony and celebration. That call could even come in the middle of the night. She always had to be prepared to join the groom at the announcement, at his commanding shout to their most major of celebrations. Sometimes these wedding parties would last an entire week. Yes, they knew how to party.

The greatest prophet ever, Jesus, speaks words of prophecy in Matthew 24. He could tell us what is going to happen because he knew then what will still happen in the future, things that have yet to take place. Jesus is prophet, priest, king, and God all in one person. Then to drive his point home about the second coming, Jesus speaks in parables, telling stories that always have one main point, so you do not forget the point.

**Matthew 25:1(ESV)** <sup>1</sup>“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.” These were ten young unmarried women who were great friends with the bride and knew they were invited to the festive occasion. An announcement had been made that the bride groom was coming soon. So, they readied themselves to join the wedding party when the groom appeared and proceed together to the great wedding ceremony and feast. **Matthew 25:2-4(ESV)** <sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>“For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.” These were the type of lamps that needed oil to burn to produce light. The wise young women were prepared for a long wait. The foolish ones thought the groom would come sooner and that they were fully prepared for the moment of the groom’s arrival. As it happened the groom was greatly delayed. I suspect the bride was not as ready as she wished to be and the groom exercised great patience, giving her time to be as ready as possible. Doing weddings for a living I have had to wait for many a bride to be prepared. The ladies in waiting all fell asleep. It was nighttime and their eyes became heavy with sleep. Suddenly they were awakened by a loud commanding shout. ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’

The five wise women were prepared for the grooms coming and lit their lamps, the sign that they were part of the wedding party. The foolish were not prepared and begged the wise ones for some of their oil. But no oil could be lent for each person had to be personally prepared, uniquely ready to meet the groom, and there we no 2<sup>nd</sup> chances. The foolish were told to go off and get what they needed. But by the time they were prepared, it was already too late. The groom arrived and all went into the ceremony who were rightly prepared.

Scholars disagree on what certain things may stand for in this parable, but Jesus gives to us the most important and main meaning of the parable. <sup>10</sup>“But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. <sup>11</sup>Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ <sup>12</sup>“But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’ <sup>13</sup>“So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

There was another time God shut the door and would not open it. Noah preached his heart out for 120 years before the flood came and no one listened. Only Noah and his family were believers. The society had become so evil, there was only one righteous family. I guess today things are not as bad as they were at the time of Noah. At the time of Noah people were going about their daily routines with no thought of the sign of the times. The people were caught in unbelief and unprepared and drowned in their rebellion against God. They refused to listen and take in the truth.

Of this I know to be true. Everyone must be ready; everyone must be personally prepared for the day of Jesus 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. We have been told Jesus was coming soon 2000 years ago, the Groom for the church, the bride of Christ. Yes, some of you are more than prepared to meet with the Lord. You have grown faithfully in Christ. You have matured so much in the Lord God that no matter how long in coming Jesus takes, you are ready to meet him. One day you will meet him in the air with the light of Christ burning within.

There are others who think they are prepared but really are not. They think somehow their lack of preparation can be made up at the last moment by people that they know. I have heard this statement more than once. "My brother is a pastor, and he will get us into heaven." That is false hope. To be prepared for the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ means you have personally received God's grace through faith. God has given to you a new birth as the Holy Spirit created faith inside of you and that is why you believe. Every person must be personally ready to meet the Groom, our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Sadly, some think themselves prepared but get caught sleeping without any provision that is necessary to make it into the great wedding celebration and feast. Their light is nonexistent at the call. They missed their opportunity. They were caught unprepared and it was too late. Their friends could not make them worthy of entering.

Jesus is preparing a place for us, for the church, the bride of Christ. When it is finished Jesus will come with a commanding shout, the trumpet call of God, and we will be united with Christ forever and ever. The question remains, "Are you ready?" Amen and Amen.