

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

In this parable, the Savior taught us how to prepare for His Second Coming.

In these last days, the Lord has said, “Be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom” (D&C 33:17). This counsel refers to the parable of the ten virgins, which illustrates how we are to prepare for Christ’s Second Coming (see Matthew 25:1–13). Here are some explanations that may help you as you study this parable and ponder its meaning.



The **spout** or nozzle was made from a mold.



Ten Virgins

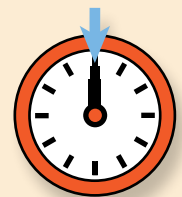
It was a custom among the Jews for the bridegroom to come at night to the bride’s house, where her bridesmaids attended her. When the bridegroom’s approach was announced, these maidens went out with lamps to light his way into the house for the celebration.

In this parable the virgins represent members of the Church, and the bridegroom represents Christ. The Lord explained to Joseph Smith that the wise virgins are those who “have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived” (D&C 45:57).

A **wick** made of flax fibers or a rush stem was placed in the spout, and then the lamp was filled with olive oil. Once the wick absorbed the oil, the lamp was lit.



The lamps were lit at dusk.



The bridegroom came at midnight.

Bridegroom

In the Bible, the image of a wedding is used to portray the coming of the Lord (see Isaiah 62:5; Matthew 22:1–14). Jewish weddings included the announcement of the bridegroom’s coming to the bride’s house. The weddings usually began in the evening, with the lamps lit at dusk. So midnight was later than the ten virgins would have expected

the bridegroom—and the announcement came suddenly.

We do not know the timing of Christ’s Second Coming, but we should prepare for it as though it could come at any time—whether soon or late.





Vessels

The vessels in the parable were containers for storing extra oil.

Being wise means being prepared for the unexpected with an extra measure of faith, testimony, and the Spirit in our lives. Sometimes we grow complacent, thinking we have enough to get by. But following the Savior means more than just getting by. It means always striving to draw closer to Him, preparing for those times when our patience, faith, and testimony will be tried.

DROP BY DROP



“Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps.”

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 256.

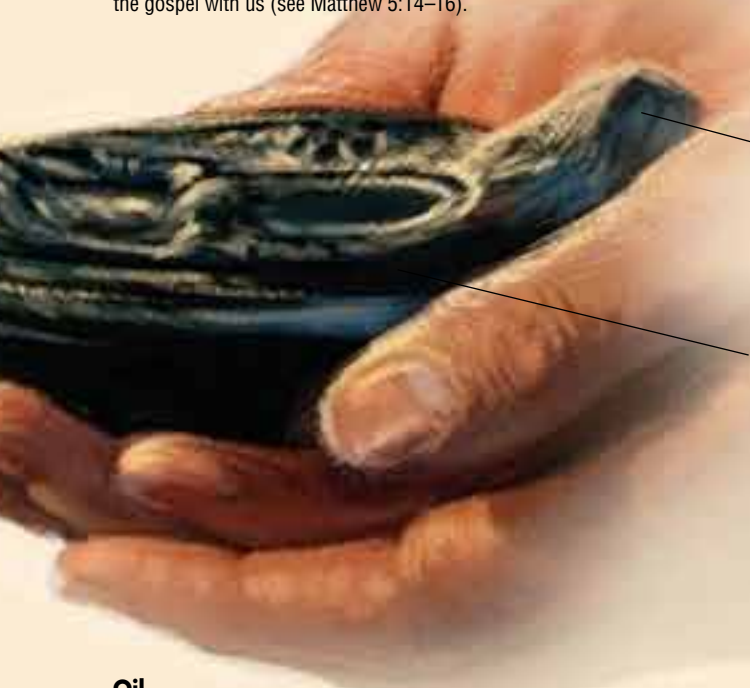


Lamps

The oil lamps used by the Jews in Jesus’s day are called Herodian lamps, after King Herod. These lamps enabled people to carry light wherever they went. In the same way, we are to carry the light of the gospel with us (see Matthew 5:14–16).



Herodian lamps could usually burn for about two hours.



The **handle** was shaped by hand and then attached to the lamp.

The **body** of the lamp was made of clay and shaped on a potter’s wheel.

Oil

Olives are first soaked in water to clean them and purge them of their bitterness, and then they are crushed to extract their oil. Olive oil, produced throughout the Mediterranean region, had multiple uses anciently: food, cooking oil, condiment, treatment for wounds, ingredient in cosmetics and soaps, and fuel for lamps.

The oil in the parable represents our faith and testimony, our purity and dedication, our good

works, and our keeping of covenants—all of the ways in which we have “taken the Holy Spirit for [our] guide” (D&C 45:57).

The wise virgins could not share their oil with the foolish virgins because “the oil of spiritual preparedness cannot be shared” (Marvin J. Ashton, “A Time of Urgency,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 36).

