

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. In the beginning was the Word. He was before all things. All things were made through Him. And He is the End, for He comes at the last to judge the quick and the dead. The Word that was in the beginning, has, so to speak, the last Word. Men may rant and rave, men may deny Him and speak against Him, but at the Last, He will speak, and as in the beginning, it will be according to His Word.

For at the last, the Lord comes. He comes to judge the quick and the dead. Thanks be to God, He comes as He promised. As the bright angels witnessed to the bewildered disciples, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” And this day it is ours to hear from the Lord Himself about His Coming in Glory. We hear from the Lord Himself what that day will be like: It will be like ten virgins who went out to meet the Bridegroom.

He speaks the Parable to teach you about the coming judgment. He speaks the Parable that you understand the visible church. Externally all the virgins appear to be the same. They all have lamps. But hidden inside the lamps, where no eye can see, is the difference. It is a difference that men cannot now discern. But truth be told, that difference makes the ten that seem so alike quite unlike. And when the lamp is necessary, the difference is most evident.

Five are empty. Five are full. That separates them from one another, even before they are called forth. That distinction means that some will go to heaven, to others heaven will be closed. For five of the virgins are foolish. Five have insufficient oil in their lamps. They have only an external righteousness. They are not ready. They have not prepared. They really didn’t believe the Bridegroom was coming. They were never the True Bride.

But the Bridegroom does come. He comes as He promised. And when the Bridegroom comes, the time is up. He knows His Bride. He has always known Her. At His coming, there is no more time to prepare. There is, in a very real way, no more time at all. For His coming ends time and ushers in eternity. And although the Lord describes the events of the Last Day by means of a parable, that Day is no parable. It comes. It comes as the Prophets of Old foretold. It comes, as the Apostle writes, as a thief in the night.

The Lord does not speak the Parable to frighten you. He speaks it to warn you. He speaks it that faith understand. He speaks it that you be ready, that you prepare, that if you sleep, you sleep the sleep of faith. He speaks the Parable that when He comes, your lamp be filled with oil. For if you can hear it, the Parable itself brings the oil.

But not all will be ready. “Not everyone who says to me “Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven”, says the Lord. So the foolish knock at the locked door, crying out “Lord, Lord, open to us”. So it was in the days of Noah. The Ark was shut and sealed. Those outside perished in a horrible fate. And so it will be at the Lord’s coming. They will call Him Lord. But if they had believed that He is Lord during their earthly lives, their lamps would have been full.

The Lord's response to them, to those who did not believe in His coming, to those who did not prepare for His coming, to those who lived as if He would not come, His answer, spoken through eternally locked doors, will be "Assuredly I say to you, I do not know you." The Apostle testifies to the horrible consequences of unpreparedness: "For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, and they shall not escape."

So it will be for all those who live as if the Lord will not return. So it will be for those who live for this world, rather than the world to come. So it will be for those who are not ashamed of their trespasses, those who will not repent of their sins, those who continue in transgression, those who revel in the perversities of this world, this world that will soon pass away, this fallen world that is but tinder for the consuming fire of the Lord's Coming.

For it is not the things of this world that fill one's lamp. Nothing you can purchase or earn will do. All men are born with empty lamps. It is God who fills the lamp. In this life God gives His Mysteries, His Gifts, that faith be worked and strengthened.

And where faith is worked and strengthened, where eyes and hearts turn to Christ, where contrition and faith are present, where works flow from saving faith, where hope is found for the coming of the Lord, there is the saving oil that God alone can give poured into you. For there is the Spirit of the Living God. And there is saving faith, and the wisdom that avails unto salvation.

So as the Day of the Lord approaches, take heart, O you who believe in Christ, you who believe that in Him God took on the Flesh of man, and in that Flesh suffered and died for your sins, you who believe that He defeated death and opened heaven to men who have faith in Him, for thus says the Lord God: "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.'"

The salvation that He will complete on the day of His coming has already begun, for He has already begun a good work in you. The Bridegroom is here, this day, to bring you the Gifts that make you His Bride – His Word of Promise, absolution that declares your sins forgiven, the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, and the Sacrament of the Altar. For the Spirit of God working in and through these Gifts keeps your lamp full of the oil that avails when the cry is heard "Behold, the Bridegroom is coming, go out to meet Him!"

On that Day the True Bride, the Holy Church, will be known – those who have gone before us with the sign of faith, those we remember this day, those faithful departed whom we name, those we remember in our hearts, and those who are alive at His Coming. The Church Militant will be transformed into the Church at rest, and united with the Church Victorious. But on that Day all who are not the Church will be locked out.

So for you, in the Lord's teaching there is a Word of comfort, as the Apostle writes "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. For ...God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through

Our Lord ♦ Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.”

Soon we will be with those who have gone before us with the sign of faith, those beloved who fell asleep in Christ. On that Day our Lord will unite us to them, and usher us into heaven, in the presence of angels and archangels and the holy martyrs and the mysterious four living creatures. And we will be added to those who surround the heavenly throne, forever in the nearer presence of our God and Savior.

And then will the Promise of God through the Prophet be fulfilled: “...the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Wake, Awake, O Christian, for night is flying! “He who testifies to these things says ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’” Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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