

**JESUS CALLS US TO BE AWAKE  
WITH OIL IN OUR LAMPS  
by William (Vim) Horn, elder**

**The Cry Has Gone Forth—*Repent and Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord!***  
This cry has been heard down through the ages—in Isaiah’s time, John the Baptist’s, Lehi’s, Alma’s, and finally in our day, through Joseph Smith the prophet. While the cry has been heard through the ages, given the hour, **it is especially significant in our time.** *For verily, verily I say unto you, that ye are called to lift up your voices as with the sound of a trumpet, to declare my gospel unto a crooked and a perverse generation: for, behold, the field is white already to harvest; and it is the eleventh hour, and for the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard.* (DC 32:1c,d) Saints, we are in the hastening time, and it’s past time for us to hasten our repentance, our preparation and to thrust in our sickles.

The cry to repent, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to thrust in our sickles, is closely aligned with why the Lord restored His Church. *And verily, verily I say unto you, that this church have I established and called forth out of the wilderness; ...I say unto you, that the field is white already to harvest; wherefore, thrust in your sickle, and reap with all your might, mind, and strength. Open your mouths and they shall be filled...yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be laden with sheaves upon your backs, for lo, I am with you; yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying, Repent, repent and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;* (DC 32:2a-f).

In DC 1:6; 34:4; and 43:5, the saints were told that the coming of Christ was, *nigh at hand*. In DC 85:25d, they were told to prepare, *for the judgement of our God is come: behold, and lo, the Bridgroom cometh, go ye out to meet him*. This warning was given to the church in 1832, over a 190 years ago. *Saints, if the great day of the Lord was “nigh at hand” as described in DC 43 in 1831, then we are on the threshold of the great day of the Lord now. And so the call that must go forth, to repent and prepare, is one that can no longer be abdicated to future times and future generations. It is our responsibility to embrace that challenge and*

*to share in it in such a way that those around us might be impacted by that call which is ours. (A Study Guide: Preparing to Be Endowed, CRE July 2001)*

None of us knows the exact time when the *bridegroom cometh*, but ALL of us need to live our lives with the expectation that He will come in our life time. All through the ages, time has been moving towards this group of people. No one since the death and resurrection of Christ really knowing whether they were this group or not. Each generation having a desire that they might be that people. Each generation encouraged to be patient, *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord...establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh* (James 5:7,8).

We may be that posterity that lives when Christ returns. I hope we are, but it shouldn't affect our response to the call to repent and prepare. It doesn't matter if we are the ones present when Christ returns—what matters is that we are prepared to go forth and meet Him, **whenever it is**. Within 70 to 80 years each of us will find ourselves standing before the *keeper of the gate...the Holy One of Israel... [who] employeth no servant there* (2NE 6:81), whether it be on his return, or when we die. No one knows either hour. Hebrews 11:13 reflects the need for faithfulness: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them...*

**Repent and Prepare the Way of the Lord – The Parable of the Ten Virgins**

In DC 45:10, we are told that when Christ shall come in His glory, then shall the parable concerning the ten virgins be fulfilled; *for they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived...They shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day, and the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance.* In DC 32:3, the Saints were admonished to be faithful, to be prepared for the coming of the groom. *wherefore, 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; for, behold, verily, verily I say unto you, that I come quickly; even so. Amen.*

With the above understanding concerning the fulfillment of the parable, we have clear direction that its message is pertinent to us today. This class will review this familiar parable to see what we can learn from it in regards to the call that has gone forth, *repent and prepare the way of the Lord.*

**CONTEXT**—Let's start by looking at the context of the parable. At the end of Matthew 23, we find Jesus in the temple, weeping over Jerusalem, declaring that he is the one they were looking for, and they, refusing to see, would see him no more until His return, *in the clouds of heaven* (v.40). When he shared this, His disciples understood that he would come again on the earth after he was, *glorified and crowned on the right hand of God* (v.41).

In Matthew 24, the disciples question Jesus concerning the temple. Jesus responds, then draws apart, and his disciples approach him with two more questions concerning what he had shared in the temple. The first question pertained to, *the destruction of the temple and the Jews*, the second to, *what is the sign of thy coming; and the end of the world?* (v.4) After responding to the first one, Jesus responds to the second question and expounds somewhat on what will take place in the last days; affirming that the Son of man shall come, that there will be signs, but stresses that no one knows the hour, and calls on the faithful and wise to not slumber, but to be awake and prepared, *for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh* (v.51).

**WATCH and PREPARE**—The parable of the ten virgins speaks to the day, *before the Son of Man comes*, and likens the kingdom of heaven, *unto ten virgins, [subjects of the kingdom on earth], who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.* Who are the virgins in the parable? The virgins are guests of the bride (the church), members of the bridal party, or members of Christ's church who have a belief in Christ, and profess to be waiting for His return. The number ten among the Jews is identified as a complete/whole number—in this context, it represents the whole church. The message of this parable to, **WATCH**

**THEREFORE**; [prepare therefore] *for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh* (Mat 25:12), is directed to all believers.

To become part of the wedding party we must exchange our filthy rags, and be clothed with purity, even the robe of righteousness, to wear to the wedding feast. (2N 6:35) Christ is God's gift of righteousness. By His blood are we sanctified. As with blind Bartimeus, who sat by the road as Jesus passed, we must toss away our filthy, self-righteous garments, and run to Jesus. He will provide us with sight, and a new garment of righteousness fit for the wedding feast. (Mark 10:49-54)

Entering the wedding feast without a wedding garment is an offense to the king. Those doing so will be removed. *For many are called, but few chosen; wherefore all do not have on the wedding garment.* (Matt 22:11-14) In Luke 12, we are told to be dressed and ready and have our lights burning, to be prepared for the Lords return, *that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately...Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; for he shall gird himself...and will come forth and serve them* (vs.39-40).

We understand that His return is certain, but the time is not, so we are to watch. Luke 21 confirms the suddenness of His return and the need to be vigilant in this regard. *For as a snare it shall come on all...and I say unto all, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, and keep my commandments, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man when he shall come clothed in the glory of his Father.* (Luke 21:35-36) The parable of the 10 virgins speaks to the importance of what it means to watch and prepare.

**FOOLISH and WISE**—Ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom, representing a common expression of the acceptance of the gospel and expectant joy of the coming bridegroom, Christ. Five of the virgins were foolish and five wise. There is a general sense that the number, or proportion of virgins, is significant because it acknowledges that a great portion of those who claim to be true followers Christ fall short of the mark.

It could be said that the foolish virgins represent shallow Christians, professed followers who are imprudent and careless with their faith, and lack perseverance—unfaithful stewards of the gospel. These are they who started on the path, some even tasting precious fruit of the tree of life, but fell away (1NE 2:66-76). The foolish have some oil, but not enough. They could be likened unto the seed which fell on stony ground with some earth, but lacked the depth needed to grow and yield fruit (Mark 4:5). The oil that they started with is soon used up, their lamps grow dim, go out, and they have no more. Jesus spoke of the foolish. *This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me* (Mark 7:7).

The wise virgins represent sincere, serious Christians, followers who are prudent and thoughtful, and have *perseverance*—faithful stewards of the good news. These are they who went forth to the end of the path and tasted the fruit that filled their souls (1NE 2:78). The wise have an abundance of oil. They are those who were planted in good ground, and yielded much fruit (Mark 4:7).

**LAMPS**—As was the Jewish custom, weddings were generally after sunset, so the virgins went forth with their lamps to await the coming of the bridegroom, and with his coming, to assist with lighting the way of the wedding party to the wedding feast. All ten brought lamps—What do the lamps represent? Various things have been proffered, but in context of the parable, one consideration is that the lamps represent the outward expression of those who profess to have a belief in Christ. Just carrying a lamp though isn't enough. Our lamps must be burning to be effective. Being prepared is about having oil for our lamps that keep them burning. It could be said that the burning light of the lamp is a true disciple's **faith in action**, a needed light in this dark world (Mat 5:16).

**OIL and VESSELS**—The reference to *wise and foolish virgins* in the parable addresses their conduct in regards to oil and vessels. The wise bringing a vessel with extra oil, and the foolish not. So, the operative concerns are the importance of oil, and having a vessel to carry it in. Proverbs 21:20 speaks of those who are wise, who obtain oil, use it prudently, and reserve it for future use. The foolish, on the other hand,

*spendeth it up* as they get it, and have none left for when it is needed. Without oil, without the Holy Spirit in our hearts, our lamps are empty, unable to light the way, and we are unable to fulfil our calling, to serve God and one another.

**IMPORTANCE of OIL**—As the lamp represents the outward expression of our faith, the oil represents the inward strength of our faith, the working of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives. It is the gift of the Holy Ghost, burning in our lives, that energizes our faith and offers light to those around us.

The gift is freely given to *all those who diligently seek him* (1NE 3:26), but in order to be used, it requires a *consecrated heart* and our response (Prov 23:26). This response includes receiving the gift to purify our lives, and to set our lives on fire, that our lives might be lights in a dark world. Without the gift operating in our lives, it is impossible for our lights to shine, for our lives to bear fruit. The gift is given that we might bear fruit in, and through our lives.

**RECEIVING OIL**—To receive oil, we must engage with the source of all oil. At times God anoints us with a significant portion of oil to accomplish His purposes, but more often we receive oil a drop at a time. Through study, prayer, fasting and humble service we draw near to God. Richard Neill, speaks of making spiritual deposits into our spiritual storehouse every time we pray, fast, study, serve others, show love towards God and our neighbors, and keep his commandments. He concludes that, *if we have surplus in our spiritual storehouse [our vessels] not only can we take care of our needs, but we have extra...to help others.* (*The Window is Open*, 2019)

Our vessels are filled with oil when we, *hunger and thirst for righteousness* (Matt 5:6), when we express, *humility and fear of the Lord* (Prov 22:4). The apostle Paul commends the Ephesians to be wise, to understand God's will, to lay aside the excesses of the world and, **be filled with the Spirit**; [BY] *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in*

*the fear of God* (Eph 5:17-21). When we are connected to the source of that holy and pure oil, when it takes residence in our hearts and we receive oil continually, our cups run over (Psalm 23:20) and we are positioned to go and meet the groom. God's ability to provide oil, always exceeds our ability to receive it.

**EMPTY and CLEAN VESSELS/HEARTS**—*And behold the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire; and they could speak forth marvelous words.* (HE 2:111) The vessels spoken of in the parable represent the hearts of faithful believers. The oil, as shared earlier, is the Holy Spirit. In order for the Holy Spirit to find place and reside in our hearts, there must be room in our vessels and they must be clean. If our vessels—our hearts—are filled with worldly concerns, they cannot be filled with eternal ones. If our vessels are unclean, the pure oil we receive becomes tainted, and the ability of the Holy Spirit to work in and through our lives is limited. Our preparation must involve repenting and emptying our hearts of worldly distractions, and inviting the purifying fire of the Holy Ghost to cleanse them, and assist us with guarding our hearts against future temptations. Only then, can our vessels and lamps, filled with pure oil, burn continually and brightly. Just as God commanded this for the children of Israel in a physical sense (Lev 24:2), so too he commands it in a spiritual sense for our lives.

Jesus taught that out of the heart proceed all manner of sinful, evil things, that defile a person. (Matt 5:18; Mark 7:15, 20). In 3 Nephi 7:34, it confirms that this will be so in the last days with many being, *lifted up in the pride of their hearts*. As with King Asa, our hearts, our vessels, must be perfect with the Lord (1Kings 15:14). Our vessels must be filled with pure oil, if we are to be servants of righteousness (Rom 6:16-18) Our preparation must include asking God to not leave us, but to *incline our hearts unto him, that we would walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments* (1Kings 8:57, 58). In his book, *How to be Perfect*, Andrew Murray suggest that, *what was at first but a little seed — the perfect heart — has grown up and borne fruit; the perfect heart is now a heart in which the love of God is perfected. Love has taken full possession, and reigns throughout the whole being*. If we will allow, God

will fill our vessels with pure oil, and our lives will be filled with joy. (MOS 2:35)

**For reflection and discussion:**

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 provides us with an understanding of what is involved in receiving additional oil for our vessels.

1. What have we done with the oil we have received?
2. How has the oil you have received been magnified in your lives as you have used what you received?

**WAIT and PREPARE**—*The bridegroom tarried* (Mat 25:4). He was **not delayed**, but **He tarried**. Why did the bridegroom, Christ, tarry and delay His return? He tarried because many things needed to come about before He came again and passed judgement. The Gospel needed to go forth, unrighteousness in the world needed to ripen, and the faithfulness of His saints needed to be tried. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise and coming, as some men count slackness; but long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (2Pet 3:9).

From Habakkuk 2:3, we are aware that some visions have appointed times, *but at the end it [the vision] shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry*. Having this perspective, we understand that His tarrying is but a probationary period for this world and our lives. This **IS** our time to prepare!

*This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God: yea, behold, the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors...therefore I beseech of you, that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; For after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness, wherein there can be no labor performed* (AL 16:228-230).

Our Christian walk starts through a narrow gate and continues on a narrow, straight path that leads to life eternal, if we continue on the

path to the end when we die, or when Christ returns (2NE 15:10). We are warned against wasting the days of our probation, and are assured that God will provide us with all we need to fulfill our calling (2NE 6:55). We are told to, *be wise in the days of our probation, to strip away, all uncleanness*. Encouraged to ask, *with a firmness unshaken, to not yield to temptation, and admonished to, serve the true and living God* (MOR 4:94). Alma makes it clear that, *this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God: yea, behold, the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors...therefore I beseech of you, that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; For after this day of life...then cometh the night of darkness, wherein there can be no labor performed.* (AL 16: 228-30)

Many of the early saints following Christ's ascension believed His return was imminent. With the delay of his return, many past and present professed believers have, and continue to procrastinate the day of their salvation, *until it is to everlastingly too late.* (HE 5:51) While Christ may tarry past our expectations, His return is not delayed, and we should not become careless and weary of preparing for his return. He is King and we are subject to His will, His timing.

**For reflection and discussion:**

1. How are we spending our days, using what God has provided?
2. What is tempting us that we need the Holy Spirit to resist?
3. What needs to be cleansed so we can fully serve God?

**SLUMBERING and SLEEPING**—*They all slumbered and slept* (Mat 25:4). The word **All** should give each believer some pause for consideration. What happens when all is well? When things go smoothly? When we are in the routine of life? Often we relax, are at ease, become less focused, become drowsy, become sleepy, and we slumber. While we slumber our guard is down and we become indolent. We stop **watching**, and are taken by surprise!

Most believers are not as the evil servant described in Matthew 24:55, but many live as in the days of Noah before the flood, not watching, but slumbering and sleeping. (Mat 24:43-54) While we wait, ALL are subject

to being pacified, and lulled and dulled into a false sense of carnal security by the adversary.

Many say, ***all is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well. The warning though is sounded, then and now, Wo be unto him that crieth, All is well; yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost...[and say] We have received, and we need no more.*** (2NE 12:25)

Christ's question in the garden to Peter should resound in the ears of all believers, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* (Mat 26:37) His response to Peter was to, *watch and pray,* (v.38) that he [Peter] not enter into temptation. He knew the hearts of his disciples, but understood that they were weak. In His compassion, he bade them to, *Sleep on now and take rest,* (v.43) for the time to arise and go would come soon enough. The wise slumber and sleep with hearts that are full—they are strong in the faith. On the mount of transfiguration, *Peter and they who were with him [John and James] were heavy with sleep,* [BUT] *when they were awake they saw his glory* (Luke 9:32). The foolish slumber and sleep with hardened, or empty hearts—they are weak in the faith. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us* (1John 2:19).

**For reflection and discussion:**

1. What causes us to slumber? How is it manifested in our lives?
2. Are our guards down? If so, in what ways?
3. How are we slothful and indolent?
4. How do we stay awake and arouse our faculties?

**THE CRY WILL COME**—At midnight, an unusual and unexpected time, the cry was made that the bridegroom cometh. *Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the Lord your God, and hear the word of the Lord concerning you; the Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple; the Lord who shall come down upon the world with a curse to judgment; yea, upon all the nations that forget God, and upon all the ungodly*

among you (DC 108:1a). From 2 Peter 3:10...*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall shake, and the earth also shall tremble.*

**For reflection and discussion:**

1. Who will make the cry?
2. Are we prepared to listen? If not, how are we preparing to hear?

**GO YE OUT to MEET HIM** – Our response, our preparation, is **not about** the coming of the bridegroom, **it is about** our readiness, our ability to be able to go forth and meet him to fulfill the measure of our creation. Lehi warning his sons to awake and, *put on the armor of righteousness*, to shake off the chains by which they were bound, *and arise from the dust*, is good counsel for all who prepare to go out to meet the bridegroom (2NE 1:38-39). Paul’s counsel to the Ephesians to, *Awake...and with the light of Christ to no longer walk as fools, but as wise*, circumspectly. *Redeeming the time*, making up for lost opportunity, and doing the Lord’s will, is worthy of our consideration today (Eph 5:14-18).

The cry for all people has gone forth. *Awake and arise and go forth to meet the Bridegroom.* [slumber and sleep no longer.] *Behold, and lo, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.* Unless commanded to tarry, as a people we are commanded to gather to Zion in preparation for His return. *Prepare yourselves for the great day of the Lord* (DC 108:3c-d).

**For reflection and discussion:**

1. What is our response to Peter’s question? *If then all these things shall be destroyed, what manner of persons ought ye to be in holy conduct and godliness, Looking unto, and preparing for the day of the coming of the Lord ?* (2Pet 3:11-12)
2. Do you believe that preparing for the great day of the Lord involves gathering to Zion?  
If so, how is that to be accomplished in our current state as the church?

**ARISE, MAKE FINAL PREPARATION**—While all ten virgins were slumbering and sleeping, the oil in their lamps became low or was used up. Without having enough oil in their lamps to keep them burning, their wicks became dry, and the front edge became burnt, black, and hard. Upon awaking, all ten virgins arose and began to make their final preparations to go out and meet the groom. The five wise virgins filled their lamps with oil from their vessels and began to trim the wicks of their lamps. Without oil for their lamps, the five foolish virgins quickly realized that efforts to trim their lamps was pointless, and so they sought for oil, when there was none to be had.

As I pondered on this verse, it was brought to my mind that the **wick** represents our faith. When we slumber, and our faith is not being fed by the Holy Spirit, our hearts become hardened, our faith becomes weak, and our lamps grow dim or go out. When there is oil for our lamps, our wicks, our faith, are again able to draw upon that life-giving oil. Then our wicks, saturated with oil more, must be trimmed of the burnt, hard edges that formed while we slept, in order to be lit and once again and allow the full expression of our faith to burn brightly, lighting the way of the Lord.

**For reflection and discussion:**

1. What hard edges in our lives need trimming for our lamps to burn brightly?
2. What final preparations need to be made to go forth and meet the bridegroom?

**THE DOOR WILL BE SHUT**—There is a time, when there is no more time to prepare for His coming. The next five verses of the parable (Mat 25:7-11), speak to what will happen to those who have not repented and made preparation for His coming. Some will frantically seek for oil, when it is time for oil to be burned. Their seeking is still not focused on preparing the way for the groom, but on themselves, seeking to not be excluded from the wedding feast. The primary message is that there is no more time to buy oil, and there is no way for the five wise virgins to share their oil. While those caught unprepared seek to remedy their situation, the bridegroom comes, and the door to the wedding feast is

shut. The message delivered by Samuel to the self-righteous Nephites stands as a warning to us today: *But behold, your days of **probation** are past: **ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation, until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure;*** (HE 5:51).

**STILL TIME TO WATCH and PREPARE**—We watch and prepare for His return, and the fulness of his kingdom to come about. However, while we wait, His kingdom is here within us, when we will allow His Spirit to find residence in our hearts. When the Kingdom is in our hearts, it will find expression in the life of His church as we gather to worship the King, and go forth to accomplish His work. When we do this, we become a people of one heart and one mind, His heart and mind, and He will look down upon us and call us Zion. (Gen 7:23) What was the condition of the world when this took place before? *...there were wars, and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with His people, and they dwelt in righteousness. And the fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord which was upon His people.* (Gen 7:20-21) It is past time for us to respond to His call to repent and prepare for His return. His Kingdom is present, and His return is assured.

In DC 142:5, the Lord encourages us: *The hopes of my people and the goals of my church, while not yet fully realized, and at times and to many seemingly distant, are closer to realization than many recognize.* He assures us that, **It is yet day when all can work**, but admonishes that, **the night will come when for many of my people opportunity to assist will have passed.**