

Matthew 25:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

Analysis

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept (χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου ἐνύσταξαν πᾶσαι καὶ ἐκάθεδον, *chronizontos de tou nymphiou enystaxan pasai kai ekhathedon*). The bridegroom's delay (χρονίζοντος, *chronizontos*—'delaying, taking time') caused all ten virgins to drowse (*enystaxan*—nodding off) and sleep (*ekhathedon*—falling fully asleep).

Crucially, both wise and foolish slept—the difference was not wakefulness but preparedness. Sleep is not condemned here as negligence; rather, it represents natural human limitation during the interim between Christ's ascension and return. The wise remained ready even while sleeping because they had oil. This challenges hyper-vigilance: readiness is not anxious insomnia but confident preparation. The 'tarrying' reflects Christ's delayed Parousia—2,000 years and counting (2 Peter 3:3-9).

Historical Context

Jesus spoke this two days before His crucifixion. The 'delay' would prove longer than the disciples imagined—not days or years but millennia. The early church expected Christ's imminent return (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17); successive generations have waited, slumbered, and died, yet the bridegroom has not yet come. The parable prepares believers for extended waiting without losing readiness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you maintain spiritual preparedness during the prolonged 'tarrying' of Christ's return without falling into presumption or despair?
2. Does Jesus's teaching that even the wise slept give you comfort or concern about your own spiritual vigilance?
3. How should the church balance 'maranatha' urgency with 2,000 years of 'tarrying'—neither complacent nor fanatical?

Interlinear Text

χρονίζοντος	δὲ	τοῦ	νυμφίου	ἐνύσταξαν	πᾶσαι	καὶ
tarried	While	G3588	the bridegroom	slumbered	they all	and
G5549	G1161		G3566	G3573	G3956	G2532
ἐκάθευδον						
slept						
G2518						

Additional Cross-References

Habakkuk 2:3 (Parallel theme): For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Matthew 24:48 (Parallel theme): But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

Luke 20:9 (Parallel theme): Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.

Matthew 25:19 (Parallel theme): After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

Luke 12:45 (Parallel theme): But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

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