

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES:

#### WHY AREN'T WE READY?

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But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be *ready*; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (Matthew 24:43–44 NASB, emphasis mine)

Most radio stations in this country no longer feature live DJs. For the most part, stations play a prerecorded program, including the DJ's banter and preselected music. Many times a corporation hundreds of miles away records the programming. These prerecorded programs can result in awkward situations. Nashville, Tennessee, experienced one of the most severe floods in its history a few years back. While the Cumberland River was destroying numerous historic Nashville landmarks, nearly every radio station featured a DJ saying, *Welcome to Music City, USA. It's a beautiful day in Nashville!* The radio stations were completely disconnected from the reality outside their windows.

Recently, my wife met with one of her good friends. This friend was anxious about the state of the world. "Everyone seems to know something big is about to happen," she said. "Why isn't my church talking about it? Our family got together last night and agreed to meet on my uncle's farm if the power goes out and never comes back on."

Many Christians wonder why we aren't discussing Jesus's return. Why do we seem disconnected from the reality right outside our stained-

## ARE WE READY FOR JESUS?

glass windows? More people are asking those questions in pews across the country than many pastors or elders would admit. Jesus's return is the elephant in the sanctuary. Everyone is thinking about it, but inside our churches no one is talking about it. Why is that?

Jesus has already given us the answer. In the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25, he tells us most of us are fast asleep. You read that correctly. Jesus prophesied that the majority of the Christian Church would be slumbering before his return. If you haven't heard this teaching before, it can be shocking news.

At that time [just prior to Jesus's return] the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming *and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.* (Matthew 25:1–5 NIV, emphasis and clarification mine)

The first thing you probably noticed in the parable is that Jesus didn't say 50 percent or 90 percent of the virgins were asleep. He said *all ten* of the virgins were asleep. You might expect the foolish virgins to be caught napping, but even the wise virgins were sleeping. You may never have heard this parable taught this way before. That's because in regard to Jesus's return, most of us are asleep and we have missed the point! That's a flippant answer, but it is close to the truth. A more complete answer is that Jesus's teaching doesn't match our theology. We think highly of ourselves. We like to believe we have his return all figured out. Jesus's words tell us we don't understand his return at all.

IT'S A GAME CHANGER IF  
THE CHURCH IS ASLEEP.

If Jesus is correct and the Church is asleep, it means everything about how we view the return of Christ needs to be reexamined.

- We may be missing prophetic events happening right before our eyes.
- We may be misunderstanding what Jesus wants us to accomplish in these days before his return.
- We may be misinterpreting scripture and leading ourselves and our fellow churchgoers astray.

Being accused of being asleep is serious. It would mean most seminary professors, denomination presidents, pastors, prophecy teachers, elders, and most of us sitting in the pews on Sundays are snoozing regarding Jesus's return. It would mean we don't fully understand the return of our king.

You can instantly see why the majority of the Church would not want to deal with the implications of this passage of scripture. It is the *Emperor's New Clothes* of the Bible. If Jesus is correct, we are deluding ourselves that we understand his return when we really don't.

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

Everyone reading and interpreting the first five verses of the parable of the ten virgins has to make one of two choices. We either have to accept Jesus's clear and simple teaching at face value, or we must convince ourselves that the parable doesn't apply to the Church. There is no other option. Because of this, many have desperately searched for an explanation that would spiritualize Jesus's simple message. Before we move on, let's look at these interpretations and examine the arguments made by those who don't believe this teaching applies to the Church.

Some teach that the virgins in the parable are Jewish. This can't be correct. First, please note that all the virgins were going to meet their bridegroom. Jews are not looking for a bridegroom; they are waiting for