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On occasion, italics and brackets have been inserted in Scripture quotations to enhance understanding.

There are questions in this booklet which we hope you will take a moment to answer as you consider this timely message. The author's answers are listed at the end of the booklet. May God bless you as you study this fascinating topic!

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Are You Ready for the Second Coming?

Commentary on Matthew 24

One day, as Jesus and His disciples were leaving the temple, Jesus directed His followers to consider the magnificent buildings that made up the temple complex. “**‘Do you see all these things?’ He asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.’**” (Matthew 24:2) Jesus’ declaration was shocking and the disciples must have wondered what He really meant. To pull apart stones weighing between two and five tons seemed impossible. Was Jesus being literal or sharing a spiritual concept or parable?

To put Jesus’ words in perspective, consider Noah’s story. Noah predicted God would use rain to destroy the world. The antediluvians were probably amused and thought Noah was crazy. They may have concluded there was a spiritual meaning to his words because logically, water is so heavy it cannot rise into the sky and then fall. Prior to the flood, rain had never fallen. (Genesis 2:5) Today, people rationalize in the same way. The book of Revelation predicts God is about to destroy 25 percent of Earth’s population and burn one-third of the Earth, and I believe He is going

to do this in our life-time. Many Christians scoff at this by saying Revelation is symbolic; it does not literally mean what it says. There must be a spiritual application because no one knows what Revelation means.

Later, the disciples approached Jesus and wanted to know more about the destruction of the temple. “**‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’**” (Matthew 24:3) Apparently they thought Jesus would destroy the temple when He returned to establish God’s kingdom. Jesus sadly responded by first giving them an overview of the rejection that His followers would experience after His departure; second, He told them what would happen to the city of Jerusalem; and, finally, He told them about His return.

“Jesus answered, ‘Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, “I am the Christ,” and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to

death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.’ ” (Matthew 24:4-14)

There are three general elements in this passage. First, wars, famines, and earthquakes are “birth pains” which will grow in frequency and intensity over time; second, people will be deceived and many will abandon their faith in Jesus due to persecution; and finally, “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world” to proclaim when the end comes, Jesus will return and establish His kingdom.

Jesus said, **“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel – [Matthew adds] let the reader understand – then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to**

get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.” (Matthew 24:15-20, insertion mine)

The Romans hated the Jews long before Jesus was born because the Jews endlessly and strenuously opposed Roman authority. This hatred explains why Nero declared Judea and Jerusalem should be utterly destroyed. About A.D. 66, he sent the Roman general Vespasian to terminate a Jewish revolt. Vespasian destroyed many towns in Judea and killed tens of thousands of Jews. Then, in an effort to eliminate the rebellion “once and for all,” Vespasian besieged the city of Jerusalem. After waiting several months for the Jews to starve to death, news came that Nero had committed suicide. Vespasian immediately lifted the siege and returned to Rome so that he could become the next Caesar (April A.D. 69). A few months later Vespasian sent his son, Titus, to renew the siege around Jerusalem. This siege began in February A.D. 70 and the Romans destroyed the city in September. During the siege, the temple was burned. The cedar walls fueled an immense fire. Many Bible students believe the gold and silver which decorated the temple melted and filled the cracks between the stones in the walls. After the fire, the Romans separated every

stone to recover the precious metals; thus precisely fulfilling Jesus' words to His disciples.

The interval between the two sieges was the opportunity that Jesus predicted. Jesus told His followers to leave the city after an enemy came and surrounded Jerusalem. The phrase Matthew used, "the abomination that causes desolation" was a religious idiom. To the Jews, it meant that uncircumcised foreigners would arrive intent on destroying God's property. The Gentile equivalent of this phrase is found in Luke 21:20. Of course, no one could escape during a siege, but Jesus warned His followers to be prepared to escape the city the moment the siege was lifted. Because His followers listened to and heeded His warnings, no Christian died when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Jesus said, "Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath" because winter travel was especially risky for the young and elderly. Jesus also recognized that traveling on the Sabbath would be a consideration. Therefore, before going to the cross, Jesus highlighted two key facts about the Sabbath. First, He indicated the fourth commandment would not be abolished at the cross because the seventh day Sabbath would still be considered holy forty years later. Second, Jesus knew that resting in the wilder-

ness on the Sabbath would be risky because the pilgrims would be easy prey for warlords and gangs who preyed on travelers. Therefore, He encouraged His followers to pray that God would help them avoid both circumstances and God honored their prayers!

Then, focusing on the end of the world, Jesus gave His disciples a summary statement saying, **“For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”** (Matthew 24:21-22) Jesus told His disciples He would return when the world was caught up in a time of distress called the “Great Tribulation” which has no equal in Earth’s history. We know from apocalyptic prophecy that God’s wrath in the form of fourteen judgments will cause this global distress prior to Jesus’ return. The seven first plagues (seven trumpets described in Revelation 8, 9, and 11) will inflict a mortal blow on the Earth and kill one-half of its population. The seven last plagues (seven bowls described in Revelation 16) will follow and they will kill everyone who receives the mark of the beast. These horrific fourteen judgments will create this great time of distress.

Jesus told His disciples the Father had shortened the length of “the great distress” for the saints. We know from Daniel 12:11,12, the length of time established was 1,335 days. However, Jesus indicated the original length of “the great distress” was longer. My understanding is that if Israel had been a faithful trustee of God’s covenant, God would have established His kingdom on Earth soon after Jesus began His ministry. (Mark 1:15) If God had done this, the end of the world would have played out in a very different manner than what is coming. The great distress and the end of the age under “Plan A” would have lasted 70 years for some nations and 40 years for others. (Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 29) Compare these periods of tribulation with that of Israel in Babylon for seventy years. This means that “the great distress” for the whole world under Plan A would have been longer, but less intense than it will be under the shortened “Plan B.” For this reason, the Father reduced the time of great distress under Plan B to 1,335 days and sealed this information in the book of Daniel until the time of the end. For further study, please see Appendix D in my book, *Jesus’ Final Victory*. <https://wake-up.org/jesus-final-victory-book/god-does-not-give-up.html>

“At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.” (Matthew 24:23-25)

Jesus warned His followers to be on the lookout for imposters during the time of “great distress.” The Bible tells us that a great imposter, Lucifer, will appear physically during the Great Tribulation. God will permit the devil and his angels to exit the Abyss (the spirit realm) and be visible on Earth at the fifth trumpet. The devil will masquerade as Almighty God and perform incredible signs and wonders. The miracles will be so amazing that if possible, the saints would be deceived. (Revelation 13:13,14.) Therefore, Jesus warned, do not go out to see any miracles.

Q1: What year did Rome destroy Jerusalem and fulfill Jesus’ prediction in Matthew 24?

Q2: How many Christians died during the destruction of Jerusalem?

Second Coming

“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he [the Messiah] is, out in the desert,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms [a secret meeting place],’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.” (Matthew 24:26-28, insertions mine)

Jesus described His return with a metaphor and a proverb. As lightning illuminates the Earth from horizon to horizon, so shall His coming be. To make the warning even stronger, Jesus used an ancient proverb that had a disgusting association. The proverb says that vultures are naturally drawn to dead flesh in the same way that wicked people are naturally drawn to fake miracles.

“Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:29-30)

I believe the book of Revelation indicates the seven last plagues (seven bowls) will last 70 days. Assum-

ing each plague is ten days in length, “the sign of the Son of Man” will appear in the sky on Day One,³²⁵ about ten days before the 1,335 days are concluded. This sign will be a cloud that grows larger and larger as it approaches Earth. (Luke 21:27) Soon after the cloud appears, a gigantic explosion will fill up the whole sky. The sky will recede like a scroll. The stars will fall, the sun’s fiery blaze will be snuffed out, and the moon will not be seen. With the exception of the fiery cloud that continues to expand in size and brilliance, terrible darkness will cover the Earth. An expanding cloud filled with powerful lightning, thunder, and energy will demand everyone’s attention. At the appointed time, billions of glorious angels will come out of the cloud and encircle the Earth. They will be visible from horizon to horizon. As Earth rotates inside a sphere of billions of fiery beings, every eye will see Jesus who sits at the right hand of “the Mighty One.” (Matthew 26:64) All nations will tremble for good reason. Jesus has come to destroy His enemies and rescue His children. For the wicked, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. For the saints, He is the Lamb of God. Jesus will speak and Lucifer and all of his operatives will land in a lake of fire, where Lucifer’s physical body (the false prophet) is destroyed and he is banished to the spirit realm again. Then, Jesus will speak to the remaining wicked and they will drop dead. The Master of the universe will

then call His children out of their graves and they will come forth with new bodies, free from the ravages of sin's curse!

“And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (Matthew 24:31)

When Jesus calls His sleeping saints, the holy angels will descend to each grave, even those in the deepest parts of the ocean, to meet and greet God's children as they come to life. Then, the angels will escort the redeemed to the hovering throne where Jesus and the Father wait. The Holy Spirit will be filling each child of God with the magnificent power of eternal life. He will connect each heart and soul with an excited Jesus and a longing Father. There will be perfect unison in spirit and truth! At last, God's children will be gathered up to meet Jesus in the air and, together with the Trinity, they will ascend to Heaven to inherit a glorious city prepared for them from the foundations of the world! The joy and awe of this event cannot be told. It has to be experienced.

“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things [the great distress which has no equal in Earth's history], you know that it [the Sec-

ond Coming] **is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation** [the human race] **will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and Earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”** (Matthew 24:32-35, insertions mine)

Q3: What physical body does Lucifer assume when he leaves the spirit realm?

Q4: Where will God's children meet Jesus before ascending to Heaven with Him?

God's Timing – Second Coming

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36)

People who wish to silence any excitement that Jesus may return imminently use this verse as an “intellectual refuge.” Many Christians interpret this verse to say, “No one [will ever] know the day or hour,” but Jesus said, “No one [at this time] knows the day or hour.”

A few days before Jesus ascended to Heaven, the disciples asked Him, “**‘Lord, are you at this time**

going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: **‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority.’**” (Acts 1:6,7) What did Jesus mean? Did Jesus mean, “no one will ever know the times and dates which the Father has set,” or did Jesus mean, “future times and dates the Father sets could not be revealed at that time?”

The latter meaning is correct because the Father has revealed times and dates in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. What would have happened to the disciples if Jesus had explained how the little horn in Daniel 7 would persecute the saints for more than a thousand years? What would have happened if Jesus had told the disciples He would judge mankind in about two thousand years? This knowledge would have destroyed the Christian movement. This is why Jesus said on another occasion, **“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.”** (John 16:12,13)

With God, the time for truth is as important as truth itself. When the time is right, He releases truth. No one can discover something before the Father permits it. For example, thousands of years ago, the Father foreknew we would use light bulbs, airplanes, automobiles, antibiotics, refrigeration, and computers.

He also foreknew the supporting infrastructures that would be necessary before each of these discoveries could thrive. Therefore, He began releasing truth about the physical sciences in little packets over time so that more complex discoveries could occur later in an orderly way. The Father has blessed mankind tremendously during the past two centuries through this dramatic increase in knowledge.

God also releases more truth about Himself, His plans, and His ways when the time is right. For example, God hid many secrets in the books of Daniel and Revelation until the “appointed time of the end” arrives. (Daniel 11:35; 12:4,9) Because we have arrived at the appointed time and the time for their fulfillment has come, the Father has unsealed these mysterious books. This is a prophetic mechanism that never fails: On or about the time of fulfillment, God ensures that students of His Word discover “present truth.” This process explains why and how the wise men found Baby Jesus!

After Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus, he was overjoyed when God explained a mystery that had been hidden for ages! Notice Paul’s words: **“Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, *the mystery made known to me by revelation*, as I have already written briefly. . . Although I am less than the least of all God’s people,**

this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of *this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*” (Ephesians 3:2,3,8,9, italics mine) The mystery that had been kept hidden for ages past was: **“That through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”** (Ephesians 3:6)

When the time came for “present truth” (truth which had been hidden) to unfold in Paul’s day, God revealed it. Unfortunately, Israel’s leaders rejected “present truth” because of tradition, arrogance, and ignorance. Given what Paul wrote, we know today that from the beginning of the universe, the Father planned that a time would come when there would be no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews refused “present truth” and to understand that in Christ there is only one body of people. This truth became one of many that separated Christianity from Judaism.

Like Israel’s leaders, many Christians use Matthew 24:36 to support their tradition, arrogance, and ignorance. They think Matthew 24:36 is forever true, but this is not the case! God has unsealed the book of Daniel revealing four rules of interpretation. There

are seventeen apocalyptic prophecies, and the Bible tells everyone willing to listen that Jesus will appear on the 1,335th day of the Great Tribulation. Gabriel said to Daniel: **“Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days** [the last day of the Great Tribulation]. **As for you** [Daniel], **go your way till the end** [of your life]. **You will rest** [in the grave], **and then at the end of the [1,335] days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.**” (Daniel 12:12,13, insertions mine) Gabriel’s statement perfectly aligns with Jesus’ testimony. He said: **“And this is the will of Him who sent Me that I shall lose none of all that He has given Me, but *raise them up at the last day.*”** (John 6:39, italics mine)

When Jesus said that no one knew the day and hour of His return, He spoke the truth for that time. Now, the Father has revealed more truth about those times and dates. Of course, currently no one knows when the 1,335th day of the Great Tribulation will occur, but it will be very easy to calculate after “Day One” of the Great Tribulation begins. The whole world will recognize Day One when it occurs. The angel will cast down the censer in Revelation 8:5 and there will be peals of thunder, flashes of lightning, rumblings, and a global earthquake. Shortly afterwards, a meteoric firestorm will burn one-third of the Earth. No one will be able to ignore Day One.

The Bible indicates that Jesus will appear during the seventh bowl. (Compare Revelation 16:17-21 with Revelation 6:12-17.) During the seventh bowl, there will be a great war called Armageddon. Preparation for this war occurs during the sixth bowl (Revelation 16:12-16). I understand the battle of Armageddon will be finished before the dead in Christ are resurrected on the last day. The devil will send three powerful demons to visit the kings of the Earth, and these demons will tell the kings that Jesus is on His way to destroy them (which is truth) and their only hope for saving their kingdoms is to unite their armies under Lucifer's command. Together, they can destroy Jesus and His army (which is a lie). There will be a timely battle with dramatic consequences. (Revelation 19:11-21) However, the question remains: How can this battle be completed by Day One,³³⁴ if no one knows the day and hour of Christ's return?

“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.” (Matthew 24:37-39)

Jesus compared His return with the days of Noah in a way that many Christians cannot grasp because they

do not understand apocalyptic prophecy. Consider Jesus' words in this passage and you will see that Jesus does not compare the wickedness, violence, or depravity of the antediluvians with *world conditions* at the time of the Second Coming. Instead, Jesus speaks about another matter – *timing*!

God announced His plans regarding the world's upcoming destruction through Noah. (Genesis 6:11-18; 2 Peter 2:5) In addition to Noah's pronouncements to the antediluvians, his ark was a visual monument that everyone could see. It was a curious structure that drew attention to a most unusual warning. Even though they were forewarned, the antediluvians did not know *when* to enter the ark. As the decades rolled by, they became complacent and busy with things that were not inherently evil but distracted them from what was important. In fact, Jesus used the expression, **“They were eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”** to indicate the antediluvians were doing the usual things that people do. Jesus said nothing about evil conduct because it was the usual stuff that went with life that kept the antediluvians from considering the ark. They did not see the animals enter the ark or hear God say, ‘All aboard.’ (Genesis 7:1) The antediluvians became disinterested and did not seek information from Noah to learn if God had given further instruction (present truth).

The antediluvians did not know the great door of the ark would be closed seven days before the rain began. The parallel for today is that God's wrath is coming upon the world again. This time, too, almost everyone will be caught by surprise. Approximately two billion people will perish during the first months of the Great Tribulation and very few people are aware of this fact. Billions of people will be caught by surprise just as millions of antediluvians who were doing the usual, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage."

I do not believe that everyone who perished in Noah's flood or who perishes during the first four trumpets will lose eternal life, because Jesus will review each life and make His judgment based on each person's record. The lesson we should learn from Noah's day is that the cares of this life will deafen our spiritual ears and waste our precious time. Present truth has appeared and God's Word is speaking more clearly than ever. Pay attention!

"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:40-42)

These verses magnify verses 37-39. Jesus indicates that intimate associations do not matter. Each person has to prepare his own soul by studying God's Word, listening to the Holy Spirit, and praying for the wisdom to separate truth from error. We need to better understand the Bible, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation which reveal pertinent information for our time! Jesus will accomplish many objectives during the Great Tribulation and the better we understand His plans and purposes, the stronger our faith and endurance will be when the world erupts into chaos.

“But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.” (Matthew 24:43,44)

The issue is present truth. If the antediluvians had known the door of the ark was to close seven days before it began to rain, I am sure they would have been more careful. For our day, the big event will be Day One. Contrary to how most Christians interpret this passage, the verse is not talking about Day One,³³⁵ The first events of the Great Tribulation will catch the whole world by surprise: Do not

become consumed with “eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.” Reserve time to study the Bible and meditate. Say “no” to activities you would like to do but really should not waste time doing. If your head is in the Word, your heart will not be attached to the world.

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.” (Matthew 24:45-47)

Watching and waiting for the Lord to return is a way of life. Jesus calls us to a higher level of joy and happiness than the foolish indulgences this world offers. Increase the silence in your life. Turn off the TV. Increase your free time. Turn off work and pleasure. Refrain from selfish indulgences so more resources are available to fulfill the Lord’s calling. These daily choices explain why one person will be taken and the other left.

“But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not

expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”(Matthew 24:48-51)

When properly understood, there is no story more beautiful than the gospel of Jesus. So tell the story wherever you can and the Master will be pleased you were giving food to those around you when He returns!

Q5: How many apocalyptic prophecies are there? _____

Q6: How many billion people will die during the first months of the Great Tribulation?

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

“At that time 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, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.” (Matthew 25:1-4)

Matthew 24 and 25 are one conversation. Jesus told three parables to amplify the warnings given in Mat-

thew 24. The first parable in Matthew 25 concerns a prophetic event that occurs about four years prior to Jesus' appearing which has a disastrous effect on Christianity. The ten virgins represent Christianity. Unlike the other religious systems on Earth, Jesus gave Christians the commission to tell the world of His return.

Jesus began the parable of the ten virgins saying, "*At that time the kingdom of Heaven.*" The phrase, "At that time" refers to the comment He made earlier, a time of "great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world." (Matthew 24:21) The phrase, "the kingdom of Heaven" means the corporate body of Christ. (Colossians 1:18) When these two phrases are combined, this parable applies to Christians living on Earth when events of the Second Coming begin on Day One.

Even though weddings today are somewhat different than they were in biblical times, enough information is available in the parable about weddings in Christ's day to understand the story. Jesus said ten virgins were sent out with their lamps. Because the wise virgins anticipated a lengthy wait, they took extra oil with them. In Bible times, bridesmaids with lamps were often sent to wait at designated locations along the bridegroom's route. The bridesmaids could then relay a signal to the bride that the bridegroom and his party were near.

“The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they *all* became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then *all* the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’” (Matthew 25:5-9, italics mine)

The bridegroom delayed his appearance and all of the virgins went to sleep. If you want to test the premise that Christians are sleeping, confront a few of them with the timely information given in Daniel and Revelation and notice the yawn that follows. Generally speaking, many Christians are satisfied with what they believe to be truth and this complacency means that “new light” is treated as “no light.” Therefore, Day One of the Great Tribulation will catch the body of Christ by surprise.

Like a thief, Day One will arrive at a time when the whole world will be focused on worldly things. Then, all of a sudden, God will send peals of intimidating thunder to roll back and forth through the Earth, and the sky will become a mixture of heavy clouds and blinding sheets of lightning flashing from east to west. People will hear loud, booming voices coming

out of the ground announcing the arrival of God's wrath. Then, God will send a global earthquake. The whole world will tremble; bridges will fall; houses and overpasses will collapse; skyscrapers will crumble; and power grids will be pulled apart. Transportation will be very difficult and electricity sparse. The world will find itself in a state of "lockdown" on Day One.

Jesus will get the attention of the world with a destructive power that dwarfs nuclear bombs. Then, to answer the questions that surface in every mind, He will send 144,000 "groomsmen" to tell the virgins along with the rest of the world that His return has begun. I compare the Second Coming to watching a parade; except the events of the Great Day of the Lord will take 1,335 days. At the end, Jesus Himself, like the Grand Marshal of the parade, appears, sitting at the right hand of the Father.

The physical phenomena displayed on Day One will be frightening. Fiery meteors from space will streak through the atmosphere at supersonic speed which start fires that burn one-third of the Earth. Sodom and Gomorrah suffered a similar fate. A few days later, there will be another long and loud trumpet blast. An asteroid will suddenly impact an ocean and the resulting tsunami will destroy thousands of coastal cities in minutes. The world suffered a similar fate in Noah's day. Then, a few days later, a second asteroid

will fall from the sky and impact a wicked continent. According to Revelation 8, this impact will cause the drinking water in aquifers and rivers to become poisonous. Millions of people will die. Israel suffered a similar fate. (Jeremiah 9:15,16)

Yet, the drama is not over. A few days after the second asteroid impact, a chain of mighty volcanic eruptions will fill the sky with millions of tons of ash and debris. The jet stream will circulate the soot around the middle third of Earth resulting in dense darkness for several months! Something similar happened to Egypt just before the Exodus. (Exodus 10:21,22)

The horror of these trumpet judgments is indescribable. According to Revelation 6:8, about two billion people will perish. Five billion fearful survivors will huddle in darkness as a great hush falls over the world. They will be desperate and anxious, worried about the arrival of the next trumpet judgment.

Jesus has to silence the Earth so people will listen to what He has to say. He will then speak through the lips of His servants, the 144,000. Everyone will hear the testimony of Jesus, and as they do, a painful revelation will unfold. Christianity (the virgins) will wake up and many will discover they are spiritually bankrupt. The foolish virgins will discover their traditions and religious views are worthless since they neglected genuine Bible study. Millions of Christians

will wonder why there was no rapture! Others will wonder how their historical interpretation of prophecy could be so totally incorrect. Christian clergy and other religious leaders, previously held in high esteem, will have their ignorance revealed. People following these religious leaders will find themselves at the center of the chaos caused by God's wrath. Initially, they will be despondent, but despair will rapidly turn to anger.

According to the parable, the wise virgins said to the foolish when they begged for oil, **“Go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.”** The oil represents the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the merchants are Christian clergy. (Ephesians 4:11,12) Jesus created this parable to make a profound point: A born-again person cannot transfer his sanctifying experience with the Lord to another person. Perseverance, patience in suffering, and growth in the knowledge of the ways of the Lord are incremental. Furthermore, each person's growth into the fullness of Jesus is unique, made possible each day by the ministry (energy) of the Holy Spirit (oil). The experience gained through the Holy Spirit is not transferable. Sadly, when Day One occurs, the foolish discover their folly and will be unable to participate in the wedding banquet.

“But while they [the foolish virgins] were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins

who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” (Matthew 25:10-13, insertion mine)

I have a thought question for your consideration: Suppose Jesus offers salvation to the people of the world during the first 1,260 days of the Great Tribulation. If so, why can’t the foolish get the oil and enter the wedding banquet? Jesus indicates that when the foolish discover their true condition, it will prove to be too late for them to repent. What keeps the foolish virgins from obtaining the oil?

Suppose the 42 months of persecution mentioned in Revelation 13:5 begin on Day 64 of the 1,260 days. Suppose the penalties and punishment for worshiping the Creator on His seventh day Sabbath (first angel’s message) are painful and only those who understand what faith and suffering for Christ is all about will be able to pass the test and obey Jesus. If many Christians are hostile to the idea of worshiping Jesus on Saturday before Day One of the Great Tribulation, their opposition will grow stronger when the Christian component of Babylon asserts its blasphemous solution of worshiping on Sunday to appease God’s wrath. My opinion is that when the first four trumpets occur, many Christians will honor their tradition

rather than embrace the testimony of Jesus. When Babylon begins its persecution for worshipping Jesus on His seventh day Sabbath and the penalty separates people from friends and family, these Christians will have no inclination to do what is right. Instead, they will save themselves from suffering by joining with Babylon's leaders and they will persecute those who obey the first angel's message. (Revelation 14:7)

Through the years, I have been asked if the five foolish virgins represent 50 percent of all Christians. My response is that Jesus used this percentage three times in Matthew 24 and 25 for a reason. Five of the ten virgins were foolish, one of the two men working in the field was taken and the other was left, and one of the two women grinding with a hand mill was taken and the other was left. Was Jesus suggesting that 50 percent of the people who claim to follow Him are foolish or was Jesus suggesting that every follower has to make a 50-50 choice? Each of us individually have to make that choice to be among the wise or among the foolish.

Jesus wants every Christian to have an open heart to advancing truth. God's truth never stops moving forward. If we are unable to move forward, we become foolish virgins. Jesus said, **“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and nar-**

row the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13,14) This means most of the world will choose to join the foolish virgins.

Many considerations can be gleaned from the parable of the ten virgins. First, this is a parable about Christians living at the time of Christ’s return. Second, the separating difference between the virgins was possession of *sufficient oil*. The foolish had some oil in their lamps, but not enough. Third, the foolish did not realize they were fatally foolish until they were awakened. Fourth, the foolish could not obtain the oil and get back in time to enter the wedding banquet. They were shut out with these words, “I never knew you.” Fifth, *all* of the virgins went to sleep. Christians are asleep so they cannot awaken the world to the return of Jesus. We live in a world of religious gridlock. The internet is full of endless arguments over religion. Jesus will soon take care of this by sending trumpet judgments to grasp everyone’s attention. The coming destruction of thousands of cities and the death of approximately two billion people will be overwhelming. Sixth, who gives the cry, “Here’s the Bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!”? The virgins are asleep, so prior to Day One, Jesus will select and empower 144,000 to serve as His prophets (groomsmen). After God’s wrath has pummeled the world, a great hush of humility will occur. Then Jesus will speak through the lips of the 144,000 and everyone will hear His message!

Finally, Jesus ended this parable with a warning. Be on the lookout! Day One is coming. If you want to know the proximity of Day One and the timing and manner of Christ's return, carefully study the Bible, specifically the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. These books are full of amazing insights and treasures. Now that the book of Daniel has been unsealed and the rules governing apocalyptic interpretation are known, Peter's words can be applied in a timely manner: **"The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray."** (1 Peter 4:7)

Q7: What does the ten virgins represent?

Q8: The oil represents the ministry of the
" _____ " ?

The Parable of the Talents

In Matthew 24, Jesus foretold events that would happen prior to His Second Coming. In Matthew 25, He told three parables to amplify these warnings because the three parables are intimately related. For example, the foolish virgins in the first parable are represented as the worthless servant in the second and the goats in the third.

“Again, it [the kingdom of Heaven] will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.” (Matthew 25:14-18, insertion mine)

When a person becomes born again, Jesus gives each disciple a mission and the talents necessary to accomplish it. To some He gives one talent, to others many.

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!

You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ” (Matthew 25:19-23)

No one should feel superior or inferior because he has many talents or only one. Remember, much is required of those who receive much and little is required of those who receive little. (Luke 12:48) Jesus wants each of us to use our talent(s) to bless those within our sphere of influence. Interestingly, the servant with two talents actually received the same recognition as the one with five. Yet, both received a 100 percent increase and the same reward.

“Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’” (Matthew 25:24-27)

This part of the parable merits close attention because Jesus will soon fulfill it. His return will awaken the world from slumber. God's wrath against wicked-

ness, displayed in the first four trumpets, will surprise many Christians (five foolish virgins) and they will be shocked to discover that they never had the relationship they believed they did! When Christ turns them away at the banquet door with the words, “I don’t know you,” bitterness will consume them. Their sentiment is expressed in the parable when the worthless servant says to his master: “I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.” In other words, “I knew all along that you were an evil man.”

The wicked servant did not have a servant’s heart. He did not want the talent lent to him because he didn’t want the responsibility of investing (putting to good use) the master’s talent, as little as it was. He just buried the talent (forgot about it) and lived as if he were the master instead of the servant. The master responded to the scoundrel’s accusation saying, “Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.” The master’s response affirms that a true disciple will use the talents lent to him, and each faithful servant will have gains to show when the master returns.

“Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has [been faithful with what was given him] will be given

more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have [anything to show for the talent(s) lent to him], even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 25:28-30)

The Master takes the wasted talent away from the worthless servant and gives even more to those who are using theirs appropriately. The worthless servant is similar to the foolish virgins in the previous parable, and the Master prevents the servant from receiving His wonderful gifts. The moral of the story is when we're born again, the Master's business becomes our top priority. Otherwise, it is soon buried with the cares of life and the unused gift produces nothing.

Q9: Jesus' return will awaken the world from?

Q10: The wicked servant didn't want the
_____ of investing.

The Parable of the Sheep and Goats

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one

from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.” (Matthew 25:31-33)

Christians frequently abuse this parable interpreting it to mean that Jesus will judge human beings on the day of His return. Others conclude that Jesus will save them because of their charitable deeds. They think if a person has more good deeds than bad, salvation is assured. The Bible does not support either conclusion. We cannot put the Bible in a state of internal conflict by “cherry picking” verses to reach a preconceived conclusion. Internal conflict occurs when one Bible verse is used to cancel the meaning of another. If we understand this third parable in Matthew 25 to be an object lesson that compliments the two previous parables, the message is quite simple: Our conduct reveals our spiritual DNA. If we follow the Holy Spirit, our actions will be selfless. If we follow the carnal nature, our actions will be self-centered.

According to the parable, when Jesus returns, people on Earth will be divided into two groups. These groups are not separated by biblical knowledge or an understanding of prophecy. Instead, they are divided based on whether they have a genuine interest and love for others. A few hours before His arrest, Jesus said to His disciples, **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one**

another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34,35, italics mine) Jesus made an example of His sacrifice for sinners. He said, **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”** (John 15:13)

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

Strangely, Jesus does not identify the saints as sheep because they showed kindness to those in need. Each sinner is born with a goat’s heart; but, when we become born again, the Holy Spirit transforms that heart into a sheep’s heart. This is the key point of the par-

able. God has prepared His kingdom for those whom the Holy Spirit has transformed. Goats cannot acquire eternal life through good deeds and charity because their hearts have no genuine interest in the welfare of others. Sheep, on the other hand, transformed by the Holy Spirit, do. Jesus said: **“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand.”** (John 10:27,28)

The foolish virgins solved charity problems by “giving alms.” The wise virgins solved charity problems by “giving themselves.” **“If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender My body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”** (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Some people say they cannot help others because it takes everything they earn to live. It is true, some may not be able to help others financially because circumstances can develop which restricts giving for a while. God certainly understands this, but the Master also recognizes selfishness and greed. When a person has no money to share, he may share some of his time instead. However, if a person spends everything he makes on himself and deliberately saves nothing for which to help others, Jesus is not pleased.

Each born-again Christian can help others with words of encouragement and genuine gestures of friendship. Jesus knows that some people are poor due to laziness and

stupidity, emotional and/or mental impairment. Others are dysfunctional because of abuse and addictions, or trapped by poorly made decisions. Given the various situations, thoughtful insight is required to help others. In some cases, giving money (enabling self-destructive behaviors) can be more harmful than helpful. In many cases, people do not want help; instead, they want to be sustained in their current state. There is an old saying, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime."

"Then He will say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:41-46)

A goat does not become a sheep by acting like a sheep. This parable is not about *doing*, it is about *being*. Jesus

said: **“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”** (Matthew 24:12,13) The truthfulness of His words is evident. Atrocities occur daily. Demons are possessing people at a greater rate, revealed by the increase in predatory violence. Terrible situations are happening, but Jesus’ servants must keep about His business. The parables of the ten virgins, the faithful and lazy servants, and the sheep and goats provide a powerful moral lesson. There will be no room in Heaven for foolish virgins, lazy servants, and goats. Are you ready for Jesus to come? Study God’s Word beginning with the gospels of John and James. Do not delay! Do it today!

Q11: The people on Earth will be divided into which two groups? _____

Q12: When we become born again, the Holy Spirit transforms our _____.

Answers to Study Questions:

Q1: 70 AD

Q7: Christianity

Q2: Zero

Q8: Holy Spirit

Q3: False Prophet

Q9: Slumber

Q4: The Air

Q10: Responsibility

Q5: Seventeen

Q11: Sheep / Goats

Q6: Two

Q12: Heart

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