

## THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE

When a woman is pregnant, 9 months can seem like a long, long time. But ladies, be thankful you're not a rhinoceros. That's right - an expectant rhino stays pregnant 15 months. Or an elephant... If you were an Asian elephant you'd carry your baby 2 years. Imagine ladies - being pregnant for 24 months straight! You wouldn't just need a baby book to collect the mementos; you'd need a *trunk!*

But the nation Israel was pregnant with promise - not for 9 months, or 15 months, or 24 months - but for 483 years - that's 5,796 months... Daniel 9 predicted a duration of 483 years - 173,880 days - from the command to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Messiah. The decree was issued by the Persian king, Artaxerxes, on March 14, 445 BC. Plot the days - add leap years and the other nuances - and you come to April 6, 32 AD. 580 years in advance God predicted the exact day Messiah would present Himself to nation Israel.

Psalm 118:24 also speaks of this day, "This is the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." The Lord Jesus *made* this day. God predicted it in the distant past - and Jesus worked it out in the immediate present. For 9 months He had zigzagged across Galilee on His way to the Jewish capitol of Jerusalem. On His journey He made 35 stops. At the end of chapter 20 He leaves Jericho and climbs up the mountain to Jerusalem. Jesus synchronized His arrival with the date of Daniel's prophecy.

In chapter 8 when Jesus heals the leper He commands him not to tell anyone. In chapter 9, He heals 2 blind men and orders them to be silent. Mark 5 mentions He gave similar instructions after He resurrected Jarius' daughter. It was a matter of crowd control. Jesus didn't want His ministry hijacked by a hysterical mob.

Jesus avoided public demonstrations... until we get to chapter 21. This was the only public demonstration Jesus orchestrated. Huge crowds awaited Jesus in Jerusalem. During Passover Jerusalem's normal population of 200,000 swelled to 2½ million. The city was jammed like Atlanta at Freaknik.

Everything Jesus did that day was a fulfillment of Scripture... When He told His disciples to fetch the donkey for Him to ride, Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9, "Behold your King is coming to you, lowly, and sitting on a donkey." As Jesus descended the western slope of the Mount of Olives, even the cheers of the crowd were lifted from Scripture. Matthew quotes Psalm 118, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!..."

Verse 8 says the crowd performed the Jewish equivalent of rolling out the red carpet. They paved the path with palm branches. And ever since we've referred to the Sunday before Easter as *Palm Sunday*.

### Devotion Box - His Agenda Or Yours...

It was a glorious day, but in the cheers of the people we find the seeds of the disappointment that would sour a few days later in Jesus' rejection. The crowd that cheered "*Hosanna*" on Sunday - shouted "*Crucify Him*" on Thursday.

"Hosanna" means "*save now*" - which is what the Jews expected. They looked for Messiah to end the Roman occupation and establish a physical kingdom - *right then, right now!*

Thus, the Jews grew disenchanted when it became obvious that Jesus was concerned about a spiritual kingdom - not their physical kingdom. The crowd turned on Jesus when they discovered His agenda varied from their own.

What about you? Does your loyalty depend on Him adopting your agenda?

Or are you yielded to *His* will? Will you follow the direction He wants to go?

## SPRING CLEANING IN THE TEMPLE

On the Sunday before Passover the Jewish families cleanse their house of leaven. Leaven is a type of sin. This is also what Jesus did. He cleansed God's house - the temple - of the money-changers and merchants.

The temple tax had to be paid with a special temple coin. The Jewish financiers would exchange currency for a fee. Sanctioned sacrifices were also for sale... at a hefty mark-up. These people were making a buck off God, and Jesus was ticked.

*Gentle Jesus meek and mild* had a wild side. He was all man. Get Him angry, and you'd better get out of His way. Jesus tosses the crooks out on their ear. His motivation was prophesied. Verse 13 quotes Isaiah 56:7, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"

# Bible Scan - Matthew 21-25

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## SERVING NOTICE HAVING FAITH

Jesus spends Sunday night in Bethany, but Monday morning He's back in action. He curses a barren fig tree. Instantly, the tree withers up and dies. Many scholars believe Jesus was serving notice on the nation. The fig tree was a familiar symbol for Israel. Jesus came seeking *fruit* but found nothing but *fluff*. Israel was full of the leaves of religion, but not the fruit of faith and obedience. As a result, God will curse Israel. She'll remain barren for two millennia.

When the disciples marvel at the miracle, Jesus tells them His action illustrates the power of faith. He says in verse 21, "if you have faith and do not doubt."

A single glass of water is all it takes to generate enough fog to cover 7 city blocks, 100 feet deep. A mere gallon of water can shut down a metropolitan area. Likewise, a little bit of doubt can overwhelm us and shut down our faith.

Don't doubt. Have faith. Through faith we can move mountains. Jesus says in verse 22, "And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

## THREE PARABLES WITH A PUNCH

Jesus tells a parable aimed at the Jewish religious leaders... Two sons are told by their father to labor in his vineyard. The first son, says *no*, but later repents and goes to work. The second son, says *yes*, but never goes... Jesus asks in verse 31, "Which of the two did the will of his father?"

It's a lesson to the priests. The tax collectors and harlots – the blatant sinners – said *no* at first, but repented at John's preaching, and turned to God. Whereas the Jewish leaders and priests said *yes* to God verbally, but *no* to Him in their hearts. Guys, repentance makes the difference. We've all strayed from God – some in a blatant way, others in a self-righteous way – *but are we willing to repent?*

Next comes the parable of a man who leased out His vineyard for a cut of the crop. But when His servants arrive to receive the rent due they're given a rude welcome – they're mugged, and beaten, and killed. It happens twice, so the owner finally decides to send His son. Surely they'll listen to Him... But they don't. They kill the heir, and seize the vineyard for themselves.

Jesus lets His listeners complete the parable... The owner Himself returns. He punishes the evildoers, and gives the vineyard to new proprietors who'll cooperate with Him, and return to Him the fruit.

This was God's plan for His kingdom... Originally, He entrusted His kingdom to the Jews – but they killed the prophets, and eventually His Son. Thus, God has punished the Jews, and given care of His kingdom to the Gentiles. Today, God looks to us to bear fruit pleasing to Him...

## Devotion Box - Loving God With All You Got !

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus cites the greatest commandment. Of the 613 commandments here's number one: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." The *heart, the seat of our desires* - the *soul, the seat of our emotions* - the *mind, the seat of our thoughts* - should all be devoted and given over to the love of God.

## WHO WANTS TO COME TO THE WEDDING ?

There's another parable in chapter 22.

A king arranged a marriage for his son, and sent messengers to deliver the invitations. Some of the recipients made light of the king's offer. According to verse 6, others "seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them." It all made the king furious.

Martin Luther once said, "If I were God and the world had treated me as it treated Him, I'd kick the wretched thing to pieces." That's what the king does. He sends his army to destroy the murderers. For the last 2000 years God has punished the Jews for their rejection of Jesus.

But there's still a wedding, and the king doesn't want His preparations to go to waste, so He sends servants into the highways, and invites whoever will come.

It reminds me of the lady who contracted with a downtown Boston hotel for her wedding reception. She got the complete package... at a price tag of \$13,000. But a couple of days before the wedding the groom got cold feet, and backed out. The lady immediately went to the Hyatt for a refund, but to no avail. She could cancel and get back 10%, or go on with the party. She decided to throw the party.

First, she changed the menu to *boneless chicken* – *in honor of the groom*. She then sent invitations to Boston's

homeless shelters and rescue missions. That night Hyatt waiters dressed in tuxedos served hors d'oeuvres to bag ladies and panhandlers. People used to eating half-gnawed pizza feasted on Chicken Cordon Bleu. Vagrants sipped champagne. This is the picture Jesus describes...

Verse 10 identifies the people who came to the wedding as "both bad and good". That's how I would describe the folks in this room... Some of you have lived good lives – others of you, not-so-good lives.

Yet both the good and bad were strangers to God's table, until the Spirit invited them. Now the difference is no longer our moral status – it's the attire we wear. Obviously, the guests who came to the wedding were unprepared. There must've been clean and festive garments available for them to change into...

One man though, had the audacity not to take advantage of the garments. He keeps on dirty jeans. The king takes him away, and casts him into outer darkness. Guys, none of us are worthy to come to the heavenly party God will throw, but He invites us anyway... *both good and bad*. The one requirement is that we put on the righteousness of Christ. Don't trust in your own good works... trust in Jesus.

## THE REAL BIBLE ANSWER MAN

In chapter 22 the Jews try to do the impossible. They try to argue Scripture with it's Author - debate theology with the Theos. They try to trap Jesus - the original Bible Answer Man - in a theological error in order to discredit Him. They match *wits* with God, and prove to be *dimwits*.

These Jews were proud birds, and Jesus had dealt them a serious blow. He'd upset their temple businesses. Said that tax-collectors and harlots were closer to God's Kingdom than they were. Labeled them thieves and murderers. They weren't about to take this lying down. They'd been educated in the Jewish Yeshivas and seminaries. They considered Jesus a backwoods bumpkin from Nazareth. These proud Jews try to trap Jesus with 4 biblical brain-teasers...

The first question is in verse 17, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" Here's a trap. If Jesus says, "Yes, pay taxes", they can brand Him a Roman sympathizer. If He says, "No, don't pay your taxes", He's guilty of treason.

They think they've got Him!... They don't anticipate Jesus' ingenious answer. He holds up a Roman denarius and asks, "Whose image and inscription is this?" The coin bore the bust of Tiberius Caesar. Then He answers, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Money bears the image of the civil authorities, and we have an obligation to obey the laws of the land. But we were made in God's image. We have an even greater obligation to Him. Jesus is saying, your money may belong to Caesar, or Uncle Sam - but your life - all you are - belongs to God!

Next the Sadducees take a shot at Jesus.

They were the liberals of Judaism. They didn't believe in the supernatural, or in life after death... that's why they were *sad-you-see*. In fact, in debating the more conservative Pharisees, they had a stock story about a woman who'd married 7 times... "Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?" To them, this was a perplexity caused by the silly idea of a resurrection.

Notice, how Jesus prefaces His answer, verse 29, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God..." Guys, every theological heresy stems from either an

ignorance of Scripture, or a lack of faith in God's power.

Jesus answers them by stating there's only one marriage in heaven. Yes, in heaven we'll enjoy meaningful relationships, but those relationships will be eclipsed by the marriage of Jesus and His Bride, the Church.

Jesus offers further proof of the resurrection by quoting Exodus 3:6... God identified Himself to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham". Abraham was obviously still alive, or God would've said, "I was the God of Abraham..."

In verse 34, the Pharisees ask again, "which is the great commandment in the Law"? The rabbis scrutinized the Law, and identified 613 commandments.

Jesus picks out the most important commandment, and adds the runner-up. The greatest is Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." But Jesus adds, "the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'" In other words, the entire Law was a description of how to love God and your neighbor.

No Jew would've argued with Jesus' pick for number one, but the rabbis had never linked both commands together. Jesus' teaching was revolutionary... He's saying your love for God will produce a love for your neighbor... and if you don't love your neighbor, there's something wrong with your love for God.

Three strikes and you're out. The Jews had debated *the written Word* with *the living Word*, and lost. But that's when Jesus poses them a question... He cuts to the heart of their difficulty with His claims.

The Jews agreed Messiah was David's son - thus, *human*. What they didn't see in Scripture was that Messiah was also Lord - or *divine*. Jesus quotes Psalm 110. In verse 43, He David says, "The LORD said to my Lord..." No one was greater than the king, but God - yet David calls the Messiah, "my Lord".

That's when Jesus asks the key question, "If David then calls Him 'Lord', how is He his Son?" There's only one answer, Jesus is both man and God.

### Devotion Box - Willingness

In Matthew 23:37 Jesus groans, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" Jesus is thinking not only of the dozens of trips He'd made to Jerusalem in His lifetime, but His mind reverts back to His pre-incarnate past.

How often Jesus leaned over heaven's rail, and tried to draw Israel to Himself, but He identifies the problem, "you were not willing!" No one in hell will be there because God sent them. They're in hell because they chose to be there. God calls. God saves. God forgives. But you've got to be willing to let Him.

### Devotion Box - Serving God... Pharisee Style or Jesus Style?

In the first 12 verses of Matthew 23 Jesus points out that the Pharisees have *no authority, no integrity, no sympathy, no humility*.

No authority - verse 2, they sit in Moses' seat, but don't have the authority of Moses.

No integrity - verse 3, they preach, "Do as I say, and not as I do."

No sympathy - verse 4, they bind heavy burdens on men's shoulders.

No humility - verses 5-8, they love the praise of men. They like the seat on the platform where everyone can see them. They like the fancy titles strapped to their name. "Rabbi" meant "*great one*". Their religion was an act to get people's attention.

Jesus tells His disciples to avoid elevated titles and accept lowly tasks.

Jesus says to you and me in verse 11, "But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

# Bible Scan - Matthew 21-25

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)  
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: [www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm](http://www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm)

Calvary Chapel Announcements - October 7, 2001 - Hallelujah Fest, "One Nation Under God", October 31, Games, Activities, Fun, come dressed as your favorite American hero from George Washington to NYC Firemen (candy donations needed) ... Information meeting for Children's Christmas Program, "The Present", tonight after Bible Scan in the Upper Room. Next Bible Scan - October 28, 2001 - Matthew 26-28

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." - Matthew 22:37-39

Bible Scan  
Memory  
Verse

## WOE NOW

Matthew 23 is the last sermon Jesus delivered. For 3½ years He preached mercy, and practiced compassion, but now in light of His rejection by the Jewish leaders His tone changes. His last sermon is a blistering condemnation.

It's interesting to compare Jesus' last public sermon with His first sermon. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus listed 8 beatitudes, *or blessings*. Here in Matthew 23, He lists 8 curses, *or woes* - in verses 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, and 29. Eight times Jesus says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

In verse 13 - instead of bridges to heaven, these priests became barriers.

In verse 14 - they took advantage of people, and faked devotion to God.

In verse 15 - the priests were evangelists of legalism. They infected people with the same kind of self-righteous religion they themselves were dying from.

In verse 16 - they played word games. They had a graduated system of oaths. Take a weaker oath, and you can jus-

tify a white lie, or a graying of the truth.

In verse 23 - they *majored on the minors, and minored on the majors*. They were meticulous with the tithe. They took the spice rack and divided out 10% of the pepper grains - yet ignored vital issues like justice, mercy, and faith. Jesus draws a funny image in verse 24, "they strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

In verse 25 - the Jewish priests cleaned up the outside of the cup - their appearance. But not the inside of the cup - their heart, and soul, and mind.

In verse 27 - these priests were like whitewashed tombs. They were clean on the outside, but inside they were full of death, and rottenness, and decay.

In verse 29 - the Jewish priests paid tribute to the Old Testament martyrs, but if they'd been alive at the time these Jews would've helped throw the stones.

Jesus says in verse 33, "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" The blood of the martyrs is on the hands of these Jews.

## Devotion Box - Don't Bury Your Talents

The parable of the talents is a lesson on stewardship.

Nothing we are, or control, or possess belongs to us. All that we have is owned by Jesus. Our job is to manage His resources well - use and spend them wisely.

In the parable, the owner gives each of his 3 servants talents. A talent was a large sum of money - the equivalent of a year's wage. He gives 5 talents to the first guy - 2 talents to the second guy - and a single talent to the final guy.

We can think of talents not only as money - but as opportunities, or energy, or talents, or abilities, or spiritual gifts - or any asset the Lord may have given us.

Two of the men invest wisely - they double their money. The owner commends them both, "Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

But the third man buries his talent - and look at his excuse in verse 25: "I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground." Fear is a robber. The man's talent is taken from him, and given to the man with 10 talents. When it comes to the resources and abilities God gives us the rule is simple... *use 'em or lose 'em*.

Notice, Jesus mentions two men who invest their talent and reap a return - and one guy who buries His talent - He doesn't mention a man investing his talent and gaining no return. I think that's intentional. I believe it's impossible to invest your talent in God's work and not see a return. God will use the talent you invest.

Don't be lazy. Don't be afraid. As John Wayne said, "Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway." When you serve God, it's impossible to fail.

# Bible Scan - Matthew 21-25 - Bonus Page 1

## SIGNS OF HIS COMING

### **MATTHEW 24:1-2 - THE OLIVET DISCOURSE**

It's evening, and Jesus is headed back to Bethany over the Mount of Olives. From the top of the Mount you're treated with a breath-taking view of the Temple. The disciples point out the majesty and beauty of the temple. It's as if they're saying, "*All is not wrong with Judaism. Lord, look at the temple.*"

Jesus sees the temple - not as it is - but as it will be. He knows in 38 years the Roman army will destroy the temple. Its mighty stones will be thrown down...

In verse 3, Jesus' disciples ask Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" Jesus' answer to their question are 2 chapters - Matthew 24-25 - known as the *Olivet Discourse* - since it was spoken by Jesus on the Mount of Olives.

### **MATTHEW 24:3-6 - BUT THE END IS NOT YET**

Jesus begins by mentioning false Messiahs as well as wars and rumors of wars - this is standard fare, characteristics of the current age. The end is not yet...

### **MATTHEW 24:7-8 - THE BEGINNING OF SORROWS**

Next is "the beginning of sorrows..." The word "sorrows" mean "*labor pains*".

This is the first sound you hear of the speeding train rumbling down the tracks. Jesus lists the signs - *nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom*. Wars will intensify, and reach a global scale. The last century saw the world's first and second world wars - 60% of all wartime casualties occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There will also be "famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places." The New York Times says that every day 40,000 people die of malnutrition and disease. AIDs is a modern day pestilence. I hate to mention Anthrax. Today there're not just natural disasters, but man is inventing his own pestilences.

And how about earthquakes... killer quakes, 6.0 and stronger... From 1890-1970, a period of 80 years - there were 39 quakes. From 1971-79, just 10 years there were 51. The 80's saw 86 killer quakes, and the 1990's saw another 100. Major quakes have become more commonplace each decade.

I believe mother nature is in the final throes of labor. Her water has broken, she's dilated to 10 centimeters, she's fully effaced, her contractions are 60 seconds apart, and she's starting to scream... the kingdom of God is about to be born!

### **MATTHEW 24:9-14 - BEFORE AND AFTER THE RAPTURE**

Next, Jesus provides a list of events that could take place just before, or right after the rapture, or both. *Fierce persecution - many false prophets and vast spiritual deception - lawlessness will abound and spiritual passion will wane* - while at the same time, *the Gospel will be*

*preached all over the world*. This may *not* be done by the Church, but the witnesses in Revelation...

### **MATTHEW 24:15-20 - THE HALFWAY POINT**

According to Daniel 9 by the time we get to verse 15, we're at the halfway point of the final 7 year judgment. The "abomination of desolation" is when the antichrist sets himself up in the temple as God, and demands that the world worship him. If your faith is in Jesus, you'll be watching this unfold from heaven!

Revelation 12 tells us when this happens, Satan will be booted from heaven - and he'll take out his rage on Israel. This is why Jesus says in verse 16, "let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains". Verse 20, "pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath" -He's not talking to Gentiles believers, but Jews.

### **MATTHEW 24:21-28 - INTENSE TRIBULATION**

Verse 21 describes the last 3½ years, "there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

According to verse 22, God has limited the devastation of the tribulation to a short time, lest there be nothing left of planet earth, and His people, Israel.

False Christs will precede the second coming of the true Christ. Jesus says don't believe it when you hear of His *secret coming* - Jesus' *second coming* is not a *secret coming*. It's as visible as a lightning bolt. It'll light up the sky so all will see.

### **MATTHEW 24:29-31 - THE COMING OF CHRIST**

Signs in the heavens, astronomic cataclysms - will also proceed His return. Jesus writes of these phenomena in verse 29, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." Jesus may be describing the aftermath of a asteroid or meteorite strike.

There's an observatory on Kitt Peak, outside Tucson, Arizona that charts the progress of asteroids that could possibly threaten our planet. Astronomers have identified 2000 asteroids with orbits that could collide with Earth in the future. *It's happened before* - there are 140 craters around the globe. *It will happen again*.

Verse 30 tells us, the citizens of Earth will see "the sign of the Son of Man", then Jesus Himself, "coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Zechariah 12:10 comments on Israel's salvation. When Jesus returns "they will look on Him whom they have pierced", and repent. He'll gather up His people.

### **MATTHEW 24:32-35 - THE FIG TREE**

Jesus says when the fig tree blossoms you know summer is near, and when you see the signs He's described in chapter 24 know that His coming is right around the corner. The generation who sees these signs

# Bible Scan - Matthew 21-25 - Bonus Page 2

## UNDERSTANDING THE OLIVET DISCOURSE - TWO COMINGS

Understand, Matthew 24 is not a chronological study of the end times – it’s a sermon, the Olivet Discourse. Jesus gives *information*, then an *invitation*... In light of Jesus’ return, let’s be ready for the escape He offers... *the rapture*.

And the first point He makes about the rapture is in verse 36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only..." If anyone says they know the day when Jesus will return, don't give 'em the time of day – especially don't give 'em any money. Date setting is futile. Only the Father knows... and He won't tell. He wants us living *every day* as if it were *THE day*.

We're given only one clue – Jesus will come for His Church when the world least expects it. It'll be as in the days of Noah. It was business as usual. No one believed Noah's warnings. They laughed at the old man - labeled him a fanatic.

I wonder what they thought when it started to sprinkle, and puddle, and flood.

The reason I believe in a pre-trib rapture is the Bible teaches the idea of imminence – Jesus can return at any time. If He returns mid-trib, or pre-wrath, or post-trib – then Jesus can't return until something else happens... and I can at some point know the day. Just count off from one of the tribulation landmarks.

For the day to come unexpectedly it has to be the first day of the end times.

That's why we need to be ready...

Two men in the field... Two women grinding at the mill... suddenly one is taken and the other left. Remember the shock you felt on September 11<sup>th</sup>. When Christians are *caught up*, the world will get *shook up*. And not just by the unmanned vehicles that'll crash, but the disappearance of that many people will stun the world.

There are actually two second comings of Jesus in Matthew 24.

There's the one everybody anticipates – *Jesus' return to the earth*. Cataclysmic events precede it – a sign appears in the sky. The other one comes as a surprise – *Jesus returns for the Church*. And to the church He says in verse 44, "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

## THE IMPORTANCE OF IMMINENCY

Jesus closes chapter 24 with a parable.

An owner leaves town, and puts his foremen in charge of his household. In his absence the foreman becomes *brutal* and *carnal*. He mistreats the other workers and abuses his privileges. He assumes the owner is in no hurry to come home.

Lose touch with Jesus' imminent return, and you lose incentive to live a godly life. The realization that Jesus can come any second keeps you pure and kind! 1 John 3:3, "everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure."

### Devotion Box - Ready Or Not?

Chapter 25:1, "the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom." Five virgins have oil in their lamps – 5 don't. The 5 *haves* refuse to loan to the 5 *have-nots* – and while the have-nots are away, the Bridegroom comes, and the virgins miss the wedding party.

In the parable, as in all the Bible, the oil represents the Holy Spirit. The people who were walking in the Spirit, and relying on the Spirit, were ready for Jesus' return. Those who weren't were left behind. Guys, continue to be filled with the Spirit. Don't neglect His power, and let your light for Jesus burn out.

## THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Joel 3:14 foresees the day when the nations of the Earth will be gathered for judgment in "the Valley of Decision". Here Jesus mentions the same event. Verse 32 says when He returns, "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats."

And here's how they'll be separated... how did they treat Jesus' brethren... To the sheep He says... when I was hungry, you fed Me – thirsty, you gave Me drink – stranger, you took Me in – naked, you clothed Me – sick, you visited Me – in prison, you came to Me. *When Lord? We don't remember you being in need?*

Jesus answers them in verse 40, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." When it comes to His creation, Jesus takes it personal. Help a human in need, and you've helped Jesus. Slight a person, and you've slighted the Son of God. The goats ignored the needy around them, and Jesus said in doing so, they ignored Him. It upsets Him. *It gets His goat!*

The separation of the sheep from the goats takes place when Jesus returns – and involves *nations*, not just *individuals*. And who are Jesus' brethren in the Great Tribulation? Not the Church. We're outta here. *The Jews are His brethren*. Here God fulfills His promise in Genesis to Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you." Jesus will judge the nations of the earth based on their benevolence, or lack of it, toward the Jewish people.