

# Stricken, but NOT Destroyed

## Looking to the Eternal, Pt. 3

His followers knew it would come; they just didn't know when. "[In this world] you will have many trials and sorrows" (John 16:33, NLT). "It is through many hardships and tribulations [you will] enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22, AMP).

In chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew, Jesus warned His listeners of impending tribulation. He stated, "Be watchful. Be ready. Be faithful. Be wise. Be prepared." (vv.43, 44, 45, 25:4) "When you see all these things, know that [My return] is near— at the doors!" (Matthew 24:33).

Among the threats were religious deceptions, threats of war, famines, pestilence, natural disasters, persecutions, and betrayal (Matthew 24:4-12)— all of which posed a great challenge to His followers' vigilance as the trials lingered on.

Through the parables set forth in these chapters, Jesus repetitiously cautioned His servants against unbelief, indifference, and lethargy and encouraged them toward singleness of focus and intentionality in their relationships with Him. They were to earnestly pursue those things which were of value to God's kingdom and put aside "every weight and the sin which so easily ensnared them" (Hebrews 12:1). Without a steadfast and growing relationship with Him they *could* share the fate of those found in His allegories.

"Since everything here today might well be gone tomorrow, do you see how essential it is to live a holy life?... Daily expect the Day of God, eager for its arrival... So, my dear friends, since this is what you have to look forward to, do your very best to be found living at your best, in purity and peace" (2 Peter 3:11-12, 14, MSG).

### Alert

1. Reread Matthew 24:4-14. What signs indicate that end of the age is approaching?
2. Now read Matthew 24:32-44. To what does Christ compare the appearance of such signs? (v.32) What is God's purpose in providing such clues?
3. What is the most challenging aspect of waiting? (v.36)

4. Per verses 37-39, what is the general attitude of mankind toward the return of Christ? (vv.37-39)
  
5. Why do many see the clues but fail to acknowledge their significance?
  
6. What is Christ's return compared to in verse 43?
  
7. What preparations would you take if it was reported that a thief was going to pillage your home?

What would occur if you didn't believe the report?

8. How do beliefs dictate actions?
  
9. Continue reading in Matthew 24, verses 45-51. What convictions govern the faithful? (See Matthew 22:36-40.) What is his chief concern? (vv.45-46)

Consider also 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:8, 4:5, 1 Peter 1:17, Psalm 62:12, and Proverbs 24:12. (Romans 2:1-11 for further reading.)

10. Are your deeds a reflection of what is in your heart? Explain.
11. Why is it difficult to be diligent when no one is watching?
12. What does the evil servant's perceived lack of accountability reveal? Who does he begin to emulate?
13. What is the evil servant presuming upon?
14. Why is the servant deemed a "hypocrite"? (v.51)
15. Read 2 Peter 3:1-18. What is the purpose of the Lord's delay? What is the believer's role? (Think on the faithful servant.)
16. What will remain after all is lost? (vv.10-11)
17. What ought to be our primary focus? (v.12-13) What, if anything, prevents this in your life?
18. Define diligence.

19. What does it mean to be found in peace, without spot and blameless?
20. According to Hebrews 12:1, how is this accomplished?
21. Return to 2 Peter. What can threaten your steadfastness? (v.17)
22. In verse 18, what action will prevent you from "*being led away with the error of the wicked*"?

### **Prepared**

23. Read Matthew 25:1-13. Who are the wise and who are the foolish?
24. What factors lead you to believe that the ten virgins are the same?<sup>i</sup>
25. At what point is the distinction between them made? (vv.6-8)
26. What *might* the oil signify?



33. The people shouted, "We ate and drank in Your presence" (NKJV). Will a man be allowed into the kingdom simply because he has shared Christ's bread and has been in His company? Will a man be permitted in because he has fellowshiped in a place where Christ dwells?

"You taught in our streets" (v.26, NKJV). Is it enough to listen to Christ's teachings? Will a man be saved because he is well acquainted with Biblical concepts, doctrines, and laws?<sup>v</sup> <sup>vi</sup> Explain.

34. In the parables preceding (and following) the Ten Virgins, the faithful and the wise, the foolish and the unprepared, are distinguished by their conviction regarding Christ's arrival. Those who *actually believed* that He would return at an unknown hour, made every effort to be found well-pleasing to Him. Those who doubted His return, or thought they could predict His arrival, put-off doing what they *knew* they ought to do.

In closing, what emphasis do these parables place upon personal responsibility and intentionality in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

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<sup>i</sup> "Notice that the issue here is preparation, not "staying awake." No one is criticized for going to sleep, for both wise and foolish virgins fall asleep."<sup>i</sup> (Witherington, B., III. (2006). *Matthew*. (P. K. Gammons & R. A. Culpepper, Eds.) (p. 460). Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated.)

<sup>ii</sup> Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 370). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> Witherington, B., III. (2006). *Matthew*. (P. K. Gammons & R. A. Culpepper, Eds.) (pp. 460-461). Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated.

<sup>iv</sup> "Jesus apparently wants to teach that spiritual preparedness may not be transferred from one individual to another. All people are responsible for themselves." (Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 370). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

<sup>v</sup> What can be learned regarding appearances in Matthew 7:15-27?

<sup>vi</sup> Excerpt taken from *His Delight, The Pathway of Pleasing God, Agony: Entering the Narrow Gate*. (2010). [www.coffeetalk.org](http://www.coffeetalk.org).