

## **Exegetical Notes, Matthew 24:36-25:13**

### **“The Little Apocalypse: What No One Knows”**

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### **Matthew 24:36-25:13**

(Matthew 24 is called the “Little Apocalypse” or the “Olivet Discourse”. It is the last great discourse or section of teaching by Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. Its subject is the “end times” or the end of time. This is the third sermon in a series of sermons on Matthew 24.)

#### **Verse 36**

***“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”***

- In the previous verses of Matthew 24, Jesus supplied signs that would indicate the approach of the end times. However, these signs are not given for the purpose of exact prediction. By reading the signs, we can know that the end is near but we cannot say precisely when it will occur. Jesus says that no one knows the exact day or hour except the Father.
- While he was on earth in human form, the knowledge of the exact day and hour was not even known to Jesus.

#### **Verse 37-39**

***“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.***

- Jesus’ point is that the people of Noah’s day ignored the warning. Noah was building a great boat far from the ocean. They simply laughed at this silly man and went on with life as usual until the rain began and the water started to rise.
- In the same way, people will ignore the signs that Jesus gave about the approaching of the end of time.

### **Verse 40-41**

***“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.***

- While these verses are often applied to the rapture of the saints before the tribulation, here they clearly apply to the rapture of those who are believers and on earth at the time of his second coming. Jesus is saying that when the Archangel shouts and the shofar is sounded at the moment of Christ’s return, a believer may be working beside someone who does not believe. The believer will ascend to meet Jesus in the clouds; the non-believer will be left behind.

### **Verse 42-44**

***“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 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.***

- Because we know the signs, we know that the season is upon us. However, we still do not know the exact moment when Christ will come. Therefore, we must always be watching for Jesus’ return.
- In these verses, Jesus gives the first illustration to indicate the importance of being ready for his return. The illustration involves a man who, if he knew what to expect, would be prepared to stop the thief from breaking into his house, but who lacks the specific information necessary to stop the thief. He does not know the hour of the thief’s coming.
- This is the reason that the specific information related to Christ’s return is withheld. If we knew the exact moment of the event, we would not have to live in expectation of it.

### **Verse 45-50**

***“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. 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.***

- This is Jesus' second illustration designed to raise the importance of being prepared for his return.
- The story is designed to answer the basic question, "Who is the faithful servant". Jesus gives two options. Option number one is the servant who continues to do what is expected of him faithfully despite the master's prolonged absence. Option number two is the servant who assumes that the master's prolonged absence is an excuse to abuse the master's trust by mistreating his fellow servants and living self-indulgently. The answer is obvious. The first servant is the faithful one. The promise is that the servant who is prepared for the master's return and lives accordingly will be rewarded, while the other servant will be punished for his bad behavior when the master comes.
- The point of the second illustration is the same as that of the first. We are to live lives that are prepared for the Lord's return, particularly since we do not know the exact hour or day of that event.

#### **Verse 25:1**

***"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom".***

- This is Jesus' third illustration designed to raise the importance of being prepared for his return.
- The ten virgins are the bridesmaids. In an ancient Hebrew wedding, the bridesmaids were to prepare the bride for the bridegroom.
- The first part of the wedding was the groom's calling at the home of the bride to claim her. He would then take her back to his house or to the place where the wedding reception was taking place, if that was not his house.
- In Jesus' story, the groom was coming and the bridesmaids went out to meet him and to take him to where the bride waited.

#### **Verse 2-4**

***"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."***

- The bridesmaids would have carried torches with oil-soaked rags tied to them as wicks when they went out to greet the groom. They would use these torches to light his way to the bride.
- In this case, only five of the women were prepared. They brought jars of extra oil to pour on the rags of the torches to keep them burning. The other women did not bring extra oil. They are called foolish because they were unprepared.

### **Verse 5**

***“The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.”***

- For whatever reason, unknown to us, the bridegroom’s arrival was delayed.
- All ten bridesmaids fell asleep as they waited.

### **Verse 6**

***“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’”***

- At an unsuspected time, the bridegroom came and the bridesmaids were aroused by the cry to come out and greet him.

### **Verse 7-9**

***“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.’”***

- When the cry went up, the bridesmaids woke up. They all attempted to adjust their lamps and to pour additional oil on the rags so that they would burn longer.
- The foolish ones had no extra oil. However, they noticed that their lamps were about to go out so they begged oil from the wise ones; those who had brought extra oil along.
- The wise bridesmaids refused to give extra oil to the foolish, unprepared ones, reasoning that they might not have enough oil for themselves if they shared.

### **Verse 10**

***“But while they 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.”***

- While the five foolish bridesmaids were out trying to find an oil store opened at midnight, the bridegroom did, in fact, arrive.
- The five wise bridesmaids went with the groom to claim the bride and then on to the wedding reception.
- Once the party had begun the door was shut. No other guests would be admitted. However, the five foolish bridesmaids had not yet returned.

### **Verse 11-12**

***“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.’”***

- When the five foolish girls returned, with or without additional oil we do not know, they were refused entrance to the wedding reception. The bridegroom refused to acknowledge that he even knew them.

### **Verse 13**

***“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.”***

- Again the point of the story is the same as that of the first two. Because we do not know exactly when Jesus will come, we are to be prepared for his return all the time.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Little Apocalypse: What No One Knows*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)