

Lesson 23: Deeper Study on the Signs of Christ Return in the Olivet Discourse – Part 3

1. Deeper Study on the Signs of the End:

(Note: **(CGN)** stands for the Combined Gospel Narrative from the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24 & 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21)

a. Introduction:

- i. In two previous lessons we covered some of the signs Jesus provided in the Olivet Discourse. These included:

a. Lesson 19 Olivet Discourse – Part 1:

- 1. False prophets and teachers and compromised believers.
 - a. Deceived believers.
 - b. Fact that many false prophets will appear.
 - c. That day will not come until a falling away comes.
 - d. People will not put up with sound doctrine.
 - e. Truth which comes from the word of God is our only guide.
 - f. False teachers among us.
 - g. Holy Spirit empowers believers to remain faithful.
- 2. Increase of wars, famine and earthquakes.
 - a. Famines and World hunger.
 - b. Effects of war.
 - c. Pestilences.
 - d. Epidemics.
 - e. Pandemics.
 - f. Earthquakes.
 - g. Fearful sights.
 - h. Animal and human hybrids.
 - i. Great signs in the heavens.
- 3. Believers and Jews will be hated.
- 4. Persecution of Gods people.
 - a. Killed.
 - b. Scandalized ('Offended').
 - c. Betrayed.

- d. Expect world hatred because of...
- e. They will persecute you also.
- f. Where Christians are being persecuted today.
- g. 215 Million Christians are currently suffering.
- h. We also Rejoice in our Sufferings.

b. Lesson 20 Olivet Discourse – Part 2:

- 1. False Prophets – False religions.
- 2. Decrease in love and family affection.
 - a. They will put some of you to death.
- 3. Increase of lawlessness.
 - a. Love of many will wax cold.
 - b. Lawlessness is opposite of righteousness.
 - c. The secret power of lawlessness is already at work.
 - d. Some abandon the faith.
 - e. Many will be without love.
 - f. Thirty characteristics of wicked men.
 - g. Having a form of godliness.
- 4. Gospel preached to the whole world.
- 5. The second coming of the Son of Man.
 - a. The Powers of Heaven shaken.
 - b. The sun will be darkened.
 - c. The Son of Man.
 - d. The gathering of the elect.
 - e. Twenty-four signs of the second coming.

ii. In this lesson we will look at:

- a. The Great Tribulation:
 - 1. Abomination that causes desolation.
 - 2. Jerusalem is surrounded by armies.
 - 3. The time of the Gentile is completed.
- b. The Second Coming of the Son of Man – In sequence
- c. Introduction to “The lesson of the Fig tree. “
 - 1. All These things.
 - 2. This Generation – What Generation?

- 3. NOTE: We will go into a deeper study of this topic in an upcoming lesson.
- d. The day and the hour.
 - 1. Only the Father knows.
- e. Introduction to “the day of Noah and Lot:”
 - 1. Increase of wickedness.
 - 2. Remember Lot’s wife.
 - 3. NOTE: We will go into a deeper study of this topic in an upcoming lesson.
- f. One taken – another left.
- g. Direction to Watch!
 - 1. My Father’s house.
- h. Parables that explain further the message from Jesus:
 - 1. My Master is staying away.
 - 2. In the evening ... at midnight... at dawn.
 - 3. You do not know on what day.
 - 4. An hour when you do not expect Him.
 - 5. Day will close on you unexpectedly.
 - 6. Escape all that is about to happen.
- i. The Ten Virgins

b. The Great Tribulation:

- i. **(CGN)** Therefore, when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not - in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand). But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened. (Matt. 24:15-

22, Mark 13:14-20 & Luke 21:20-24)

- ii. **The Great Tribulation:** Beginning with Mt 24:15, Jesus speaks about unique signs that will occur during the end-time period. This is the time often called the “tribulation” (Rev 7:14; cf. “great distress” in Mt 24:21—the phrase in Greek is the same). The signs that occur will be warnings that the end of this present age is very near (Mt 24:15-29). These signs will lead up to and signal Christ’s physical return to earth after the tribulation (Mt 24:30-31; cf. Rev 19:11–20:4). At Christ’s return, he will destroy the forces of the antichrist and evil, and he will establish an earthly reign of peace for the last thousand years of time as we know it...
 The first major sign that signals the beginning of the great tribulation is “the abomination that causes desolation” (Mt 24:15). This phrase refers to a specific observable event that tells God’s faithful followers (who are alive during the great tribulation) that Christ’s literal return to earth will happen very shortly. (Christ’s followers during the tribulation are those who accept Christ after he has already taken the faithful people of his churches from the world... This visible sign or event refers primarily to the future desecration (i.e., act of defilement, corruption, abuse) of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem by the antichrist (see Da 9:27...; 1Jn 2:18...). The antichrist, or man of lawlessness, will set up an image of himself in God’s temple, declaring himself to be “God” (2Th 2:3-4; Rev 13:14-15). The following are important facts about this event that will be the turning point for all that continues to happen.
 - a. The “abomination that causes desolation” will mark the beginning of the final stage of the tribulation, which ends in Christ’s return to earth to defeat the forces of the antichrist and bring judgment and destruction on the ungodly at the battle of Armageddon (Mt 24:21, 29-30; Da 9:27; Rev 19:11-21).
 - b. By noting the time of this event (“So when you see ... ” in Mt 24:15), Christ’s followers during the tribulation can know with great certainty when the tribulation will end and Christ will come to reign on earth (see Mt 24:33...). The time span between this event and the end is given four times in the Bible as three and a half years, or 1,260 days (see Da 9:25-27; Rev 11:1-2; 12:6; 13:5-7; see Da 9:25-27...)...). (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- iii. **The Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem rebuilt.**
 - a. For the Antichrist to defile the temple it would require the rebuilding of a temple.
 - b. In Rev. 12:1 John is told to “Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.” Here again, for this to

occur the temple must be rebuilt.

- c. The Temple institute in Jerusalem, Israel is fully prepared to build the temple and to furnish it according to all the instructions in the Torah. They say that within 1-year they can have it fully built and operational to the point sacrifices can resume.
- d. The first place of worship ever built was called Solomon's Temple and is discussed in 1 Chronicles, chapters 22, 28, and 29, and 2 Chronicles, chapters 2–7. This temple was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in approximately 590 B.C. Seventy years later it was rebuilt under Zerubbabel and Joshua. This second temple was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, a Greco-Syrian ruler. He stuck a pig in the temple—an act which prefigured the final desecration to occur under Antichrist as he sets up “the abomination of desolation” in the Tribulation temple (Matthew 24:15). Now we find that a third temple has been erected. It is probably not the final Millennial Temple of Ezekiel 40–48, but one which is built during the Tribulation hour and used sacrilegiously by the beast who claims to be God (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4). This temple, its altar, and the attendants are Jewish. There is no outer court for Gentiles as there was in past temples. (Van Impe)

iv. **Before we look at the “Abomination that Causes Desolation” lets look at why do we study past, present and future references to one portion of scripture.**

- a. ... The answer is simple. The scene we are about to witness speaks of the entire age-long conflict from beginning to end. Its details are squeezed into these few verses before us. The same devil who attempted to destroy the woman's (or Israel's) son in centuries past (see Genesis 3:15) is now about to strike out against the woman herself via the greatest anti-Semitic purge in history. Hitler's murderous and barbaric attempt at Jewish annihilation will seem like a Sunday school picnic compared to this holocaust! That's why Daniel stated: “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (12:1). Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24:21–22, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.” The elect, as spoken of here, are the Israelites of Romans 11:28. (Van Impe)

- b. This reference to multiple future events is sometimes called “prophetic foreshadowing,” a term used when two or more events are viewed and described as if they are one. Another example of this is when Christ’s first coming (to bring the message of spiritual salvation) and his second coming (to bring judgment) in Isa 11:1-4, 61:1-2 and Zec 9:9-10 are combined in a single prophecy which describes these comings as if they were a single event... In a similar way, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Christ’s followers at Pentecost and “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” are combined and described as one event in Joel 2:28-31. Jesus’ description of Jerusalem’s destruction is symbolic of the great tribulation that occurs in the end times... (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

v. **Concerning the “Abomination that Causes Desolation”**

- a. **Finis Dake writes:** “When—this marks the starting point of the middle of Daniel’s 70th week when the Antichrist will break his 7-year covenant with Israel and enter Judea to take over Jerusalem as his capital and the Jewish temple as his capital building (Dan_9:27; Dan_11:40-45; Dan_12:1, Dan_12:7; 2Th_2:4; Rev_11:1-2; Rev_12:1-17; Rev_13:1-18). All this prophecy from Mat_24:15 on must be fulfilled the last 3 1/2 years of this age. (Dake)

- 1. **Dan. 9:25-27 (NKJV)** “Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. ²⁶ “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷ Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate.”

- b. **The Fire Bible commentary adds:** This refers to a major pivotal event that pollutes what is holy or reserved for God’s worship and purposes (see Da 9:25-27).

- 1. Christ’s statement may prophetically refer to two specific events:

- a. the Roman invasion of Jerusalem when the temple was destroyed (A.D. 70) and
- b. the placing of the antichrist's image in Jerusalem just before Christ returns to defeat him and to judge the wicked (see 2Th 2:2-3; Rev 13:14-15; 19:11-21). (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- c. In Revelation chapter 12 we see that the False Prophet will arise and will deceive the people with lying signs and wonders and lead the people to worship the beast. Ultimately, he convinces the people to make an image to the beast. In his book *Revelation Revealed*, Jack Van Impe writes: "The sole purpose of all these miracles is to prepare the people for idolatry. The false prophet actually entices mankind to build the greatest statue in history in the very image of the Antichrist. This monstrosity will be erected in Jerusalem and will be placed in the Jewish Temple. Such a blasphemous act is against the city conscience and is forbidden by the second commandment (see Exodus 20:4). This is why the image is such an obnoxious, hateful, and abominable thing and is labeled the "abomination of desolation" by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24:15. (Van Impe)
- d. The Greek words are shiqquwts, for Abomination, and shamem, for Desolation. They define a disgusting, filthy, detestable and especially idolatrous thing that essentially destroys the important elements of the Temple and utterly stuns all those who witness it. The Abomination of Desolation that Daniel prophesied about was acknowledged by Jesus Christ in His Olivet Discourse.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Matthew 24:15-16)

It's important to take note of a couple things that Jesus Christ points out.

1. "When you see" – People will see the Antichrist perform the abominable act inside the Temple. Certainly, people in the Temple will see it, but this is alluding to Jews at large in Judea and not all of them will be in the Temple at the time. It is likely, that while the world is celebrating the deaths of the Two Witnesses and watching their bodies lie dead outside the Temple, the gift givers will also be glimpsing live action shots of the Antichrist's sacrilegious

and Anti-Semitic actions taking place inside the Temple.

2. “Standing in the holy place” – Apparently, the wing in the Temple where the Abomination of Desolation gets set up is in the holy place. This likely alludes to the “Holy of Holies,” which is the Kodesh HaKodashim in Hebrew. As its name implies, this was the most sacred part of the entire Temple. Entry was forbidden except on Yom Kippur when the high priest entered the inner sanctuary alone. It is called the holy place in the book of Exodus.
 “And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out, that he may not die.” (Exodus 28:35)
 If you are going to desecrate the Temple the Holy of Holies is the most symbolic place to accomplish this.
3. “Whoever reads, let him understand” – This is not a suggestion, but a direct order from the Messiah. Due to the significance of the details in this verse, everyone who reads it must understand it. Certainly, the Jews in Judea at the time need to understand because their lives depend on it. They need to “flee to the mountains” without delay. If they don’t heed Christ’s warning they run the risk of being killed in the Antichrist’s Jewish genocidal campaign of Zec. 13:8.

The fact that Jesus Christ says, “Whoever reads, let him understand,” speaks to the significance of this prophetic event. The Abomination of Desolation signals that the Great Tribulation Period is about to begin. A few verses later, Christ further acknowledges:

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” (Matthew 24:21-22)

The Great Tribulation Period spans the final 3 ½ years of the Tribulation period. It is the worst of the worst times on earth. The Antichrist will be setting up his global economy and expecting people to receive his Mark and to worship him. Rev. 20:4 points out that many Christians will get beheaded for refusing to worship the Antichrist or his image and for rejecting his Mark. During this dreadful period, two-thirds of the Jewish race will be killed as per

Zec. 13:8. (Salus)

- vi. **Jerusalem Being Surrounded with Armies.** Once again, Jesus seems to be blending a reference to the events of A.D. 70... with a description of end-time events preceding his return to earth at the end of the tribulation period... In this way, Jesus was describing the fulfillment of his own prophecy that divine justice would “come upon this generation” (Mt 23:36; cf. Lk 23:27-30) for rejecting him. He was also answering the disciples’ question about “the signs of your coming and of the end of the age” (Mt 24:3). (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

- vii. **The Times of the Gentiles.** The phrase, “the times of the Gentiles,” refers to the time Israel would be under the rule or oppression of non-Jews. The beginning of this time can be traced all the way back to when a part of Israel was taken to Babylon in 586 B.C. (2Ch 36:1-21; Da 1:1-2). It will not end until “the times” are fulfilled, which probably means when Christ returns to earth in glory and power to establish his rule over all nations at the end of history (1:32-33; Jer 23:5-6; Zec 6:13; 9:10; Ro 11:25-26; Rev 20:4). During “the times of the Gentiles,” all people will have opportunities to accept Christ as the Forgiver of their sins and the Leader of their lives. These opportunities will end with Christ’s final return.). (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
 - a. **Rom. 11:25-26 (NKJV)** For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

- viii. **Concerning the “days were shortened”**
 - a. Jack Van Impe in his commentary on Revelation chapter 16 discusses the 4th bowl judgment writes about this topic. He wrote: “The inhabitants of planet earth now experience the greatest heat wave in history. Many of us remember what happened in the south during the summer of 1980. Crops were parched and great numbers of people died as temperatures consistently soared over one hundred degrees. Now we see what happens when the sun is out of control. Isaiah predicted this period of time in chapter 24, verses 4–6: “The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are

burned, and few men left.”

The earth becomes so drastically hot during this judgment that God has to alleviate the suffering by shortening the daylight hours. Jesus said in Matthew 24:22, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” What did He mean? Many scholars have proposed the idea of the Tribulation period being abbreviated, but this is an impossibility because God’s predestined program for the Tribulation totals seven years—or eighty-four months, or exactly 2,520 days. Since the scheduled timetable is already prophesied, not one day can be cut from the program. Verse 2 of chapter 11 mentions 1,260 days as one half of this period, and no one can change God’s plan. Therefore, we must find another explanation.

Is there a solution? Definitely! God shortens the daylight hours and lengthens the night seasons to keep millions alive. He accomplishes this by darkening the sun, as predicted by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened” (Matthew 24:29). This statement harmonizes with Revelation 6:12: “And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair.” God’s method of shortening the daylight hours hinders the sun’s death purge of earth’s inhabitants by reducing the amount of ultraviolet rays bombarding the planet. This act of mercy is for His people, the saved Tribulation saints, for He adds in Matthew 24:22, “But for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”

Once again we need to remember that the Church, the elect Bride of Christ composed of all those who were born again prior to the Rapture (chapter 4, verse 1), is at home in glory during this time. The earthly group of Tribulation saints presently being discussed constitutes the election of Romans 11:28. They are also referred to as Jacobites, or Israelites, in Romans 11:26. These are Jews. They are not members of the Bride of Christ, but rather members of the wife of Jehovah. (Van Impe)

c. The Second Coming of the Son of Man.

- i. **(CGN)** “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. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt. 24:29-30, Mark 13:24-26 & Luke 21:25)

- ii. **(CGN)** And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other - from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift your heads, because your redemption draws near.” (Matt. 24:31 & Mark 13:27)
- iii. We studied this topic at the end of the last lesson but to place them in sequence as Jesus taught it falls after the “Great Tribulation”.

d. The Lesson of the Fig Tree

- i. **(CGN)** “Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see all these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. (Matt. 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-31 & Luke 21:29-33)
 - a. **The Fig Tree.** The leaves blooming on the fig tree (cf. Lk 21:29-31) represent events that will occur during the tribulation (vv. 15-29). Some interpret the fig tree itself to represent the restoration of Israel as a political state or nation, which has already taken place (cf. Hos 9:10; Lk 13:6-9) (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
 - b. It is commonly believed that this prophecy refers to the generation that saw Israel become a nation again in 1948.
 - c. **NOTE: We will take a deeper dive into the “Fig Tree” and “This Generation” in an upcoming lesson.**

e. The Day and Hour:

- i. **(CGN)** “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matt. 24:36 & Mark 13:32)
- ii. **Only the Father.** This verse explains that only God the Father knows the time of Christ’s return. We must understand that this statement comes from the perspective of Christ’s time on earth. Certainly now Jesus, who is himself God and has since returned to his former glory with the Father (Jn 1:1-2; 17:5), has future knowledge of his return—both before and after the tribulation (see v. 44...). Christ’s followers during the tribulation can also know the time of his final return by observing the signs of the tribulation that Christ described... (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

- iii. Note that this only tells us we will not know the day or the hour. It does not say anything about the year or the season.
 - a. As we discussed in the last lesson believers should be able to discern the season and possibly even the year.
 - b. Specifically, believers who are on earth during the tribulation will be able to determine 3.5 years after the abomination of desolation and easily determine the year and season of the second coming of Christ to the earth.
- iv. Rosh Hashanah and the Rapture.
 - a. We discussed in lesson 22 “Biblical Fall Feast and How They relate to the End of this age” how this most likely related to Rosh Hashanah.
 - b. Rosh Hashanah is known as “The Feast of Trumpets” and it is a picture of the rapture.
 - c. After Jews were dispersed throughout the nations Rosh Hashanah became a 2-day feast and was called “the one long day”
 - 1. Rosh Hashanah was the only Biblical Feast that would start on the first day of the month.
 - 2. In ancient times they did not know for sure when the month started until the spotters saw the new moon.
 - 3. The official timing of God’s calendar was based upon when the signs of the moon was observed in Jerusalem.
 - 4. They would spread the word from Jerusalem to other communities of Jews by the sound of the Shofar and a signal fire lit on the mountains.
 - 5. When new moon was spotted in Jerusalem, they would signal the next spotter on the next mountain, and they would send the signal to the next spotter.
 - 6. It took over 24 hours for this to arrive at the last community.
 - d. Therefore, the Feast of Trumpets had a saying assigned to it. The Jews would speak about it as that you would not know “the day or the hour”
 - e. In the Olivet Discourse when Jesus made the comment that “but of that day and hour no one knows” to the disciples who were Jewish, no doubt they understood this as a reference to Rosh Hashanah.
 - f. **Like the Days of Noah and Lot:**

- i. **(CGN)** But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away and destroyed them all, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.
Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. (Matt. 24:37-39, Luke 17:26-30 & Luke 17:26-32)
- ii. **Increase of Wickedness.** An un-believable increase in immoral behavior, shamelessness and rebellion against God will characterize the last days. Many people will turn against all moral guidelines, resulting in even more ungodly sexual practices, immorality, adultery, pornography, drugs, ungodly music and lustful entertainment. It will be "as it was in the days of Noah" (v. 37), when the thoughts and desires of human hearts were evil continually (see Ge 6:5). It will be as "in the days of Lot" (Lk 17:28, 30), when homosexuality, lesbianism and all kinds of unholy sexual relations filled all levels of society (see Ge 19:5...; 1Ti 4:1...; 2Ti 3:1-8...). Jesus goes on to explain that true love will be rare. (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
 - a. **Remember Lot's Wife!** The tragic error of Lot's wife (Ge 19:26) was to place her interests and affections on an earthly society rather than on a heavenly one (cf. Heb 11:10). She turned back because her heart (her affections and desires) still wanted to be in Sodom (Ge 19:17, 26...). Every believer should ask: Is my attention more focused on temporary things or eternal things? Is my heart more attached to earthly things than to Jesus and the hope of his return? Luke 17:32 (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- iii. **NOTE: We will take a deeper dive into the "Days of Noah" in an upcoming lesson.**
- g. **One taken – another left.**
 - i. **(CGN)** "I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. (Matt. 24:40-41 & Luke 17:34-36)
 - ii. **One... Taken ... The Other Left.** Christ's statement that "one will be taken and the other left" is directly related to the warning he has already given to his disciples, which includes all who would follow Christ as part of his church. For

this reason, these words likely refer to those who will be taken out of the world when Christ calls them to be with him at “the rapture” of the church (see Jn 14:3...). The word “rapture” comes from the Latin word *raptu*, which means “caught away” or “caught up.” This Latin word carries the same meaning as the Greek *harpazō*, which is translated “caught up” in 1Th 4:17. This event, also described in 1Co 15, refers to the time when the church (i.e., all true followers of Christ—those alive and those who have died and whose bodies will be resurrected) will be taken from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. Those who are alive on earth and truly following Christ at this time will be prepared for this event, yet it will still involve a real element of surprise (see v. 37...) (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

iii. **Is this a reference to the Rapture of the Church?** Luke 17:37, as well as Matthew 24:28, depicts some people being taken, while others are left. Jesus says they are taken to where the vultures gather to eat the corpse. How could this be the Rapture? There are four groups of people who are taken somewhere.

1. Those Raptured from earth to heaven by God. 1 Thessalonians 4:11-18
2. Those driven by demons to Armageddon. Revelation 16:13-16
3. Those taken by force from Jerusalem by the Antichrist and put to death. Matthew 24:15-22; Zechariah 14:2
4. Those taken by God into the fire at the sheep/goat judgment. Matthew 25:31-46

Of these four, the only ones going to where the birds eat their flesh are those driven by demons to Armageddon. God does not take them anywhere.

Understand the disciples spoke in Hebrew or Aramaic and their direct quotes were written into Greek and translated into English. We must look for Hebrew idioms. “Where?” in Hebrew can mean “where to” or “where from” not just “where” like in English... (Johnson)

h. **Direction to Watch!!!**

- i. **(CGN)** Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. (Matt. 24:42-44)

- ii. **Therefore Keep Watch.** The words “keep watch” (Gk grēgoreō) are in the present imperative tense, meaning this is a continuous action at the present time. That is, we must always be prepared right now and from here on—ready for the Lord’s return at any time (see Jn 14:3...). There will be no instant warning signs, so Christ’s followers must always live as if he could come today (... Mk 13:33-37) (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
 - a. **John 14:1-3 (NKJV)** “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.
 - b. **My Father’s House.** This phrase clearly refers to heaven, the place to which Jesus was returning to prepare a place for his followers (Mt 6:9; cf. Ps 33:13-14; Isa 63:15). God’s eternal home has many “rooms” (implying permanent “dwelling places”). Members of “God’s household” now on earth (Eph 2:19) will one day transfer to their eternal home with God. “For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Heb 13:14). John 14:2

i. **Parables that Explain Further the Message from Jesus.**

- i. **(CGN)** It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch! Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch therefore and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. (Matt. 24:44, Mark 13:34-37 & Luke 21:34-36)

- ii. **My Master is Staying Away.** Christ’s unexpected return will not motivate those within the church who are unfaithful to the Lord and who see no need to be prepared and to remain ready.
 - a. Anyone who claims to be a Christian but continues to ignore God’s standards and lives in sin, believing that Christ will delay his coming for a few years, can be compared to the wicked servant. Such a

person will feel no immediate threat that the Lord's return will take him or her off guard (see v. 44...; Lk 12:45...).

- b. It is significant that Jesus connects spiritual unfaithfulness and insincerity with the belief and desire that Christ will not come anytime soon. (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- iii. **In the Evening ... Midnight ... at Dawn** Christ reinforces the fact that his return for his faithful followers could occur at any time—day or night. He teaches clearly that this first stage of his second coming will be totally unexpected, when his faithful people (both those who have died and those alive at the time) will be taken from the earth to be with Christ... Since his return will be sudden and unexpected, all believers must be spiritually alert and remain faithful to Christ (see Mt 24:42...; 24:44...; cf. Lk 12:35-36, 38-40, 46; 21:34-36). The final stage of Christ's second coming will be when he literally and physically returns to earth at the end of the tribulation period... to defeat the forces of the antichrist, to judge the wicked and to establish a reign of peace on earth (see Rev 19–20...). (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- iv. **You do not Know on What Day.** Christ's warning that his followers must always be ready relates to his return from heaven to take his church out of the world during the rapture—the event described in 1Th 4:13-18 (see 24:40...; Jn 14:3...). This means that it applies to us today.
 - a. Jesus clearly states that his coming for his followers living before the tribulation will be at an unexpected time and without warning—“because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” In fact, Jesus says that he will return at a time when they “do not expect him” (v. 44). This clearly points to an element of surprise, amazement and unexpectedness, even for his faithful followers in the church. This is sometimes referred to as the first stage of Christ's second coming (the second stage being his expected return to earth following the tribulation period).
 - b. Unlike Christ's coming at the rapture, his final return “with power and glory” to judge the world after the tribulation (v. 30; Rev 19:11-21) will be expected, anticipated and foreseen by his followers (Lk 21:28; see v. 33...). Some Bible passages even give time frames of the period preceding this event (see Da 9:25-27; Rev 11:1-2; 12:6; 13:5-7...). The events and signs during the tribulation will create an attitude of certainty and expectancy for those who boldly follow Christ during this time of intense persecution. They will not experience the element of surprise that the present-day Christian church will have at the time of the rapture... Christ's coming after the tribulation is sometimes regarded as the second stage of Christ's second coming... (Fire Bible:

- v. **An Hour When You do not Expect Him.** Once again, Christ refers to his return for the faithful people in his churches at an unexpected and unknown time.
 - a. This warning is not for those who go through the tribulation... The only way to reconcile Christ's teaching about his unexpected coming (vv. 42, 44) with his statement about his expected coming (v. 33) is to assume that there will be two phases, or stages, to his "second coming."
 - 1. The first stage involves Christ's return at an unexpected time to take his true church from earth (cf. 1Th 4:17; see Jn 14:3...; Rev 3:10...). This happens prior to the antichrist's rise to power and God's end-time judgments on the earth (see Rev 6–19).
 - 2. The second stage is Christ's coming at the end of the tribulation, which will be at an expected time (i.e., after certain cosmic signs, vv. 29-30, and a certain time period, see Da 9:25-27; Rev 11:1-2; 12:6; 13:5-7; see Da 9:25-27...). At that time, he will destroy the wicked and begin his reign on earth (see v. 42...; Rev 19:11-21; 20:4).
 - b. This second coming of Christ—described as one event consisting of two phases—is similar to how the OT predicted Christ's first coming to earth as a human. The OT prophets often spoke as if the Messiah's (i.e., Christ's) coming were a single event, but the fulfillment of those prophecies is seen in two phases:
 - 1. his coming by birth to eventually die for sin and
 - 2. his coming to reign on earth at the end of time as we know it (see Isa 9:2-7; 40:3-5; compare Isa 61:1-3 with Lk 4:18-19; see Isa 9:7...).
 - c. Christ's urgent warning to be always spiritually ready for his coming at the unknown time (i.e., the rapture) applies to all generations of Christians before the tribulation (vv. 15-29). It should provide strong motivation for remaining true to our faith in Christ and our commitment to the standards of his Word. (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- vi. **Day will Close on you Unexpectedly.** Jesus ends his prophetic message by warning believers not to be so preoccupied with the cares and pleasures of

the world that they fail to be prepared for his coming.

- a. These words are meant for all God's people of all times, not just those living during the final days of tribulation. The demand for spiritual faithfulness is most important as we live with the reality of Jesus' teaching that he will first return for his faithful followers at an unexpected time. Since the time of his coming for the church cannot be determined, believers must always be ready (see Mt 24:40, 42...).
- b. This coming at an unknown time (referred to as the rapture of the church, described in 1Th 4:16-17) "rescues us from the coming wrath" (1Th 1:10), so that we "may be able to escape all that is about to happen" on earth (vv. 35-36; cf. vv. 25-26...; Rev 3:10... Luke 21:34 (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

- vii. **Escape all that is About to Happen.** Christians must always be alert against sin and in constant communication with God through prayer so that their love for Christ will not fade and their faith in him will remain strong. This is the only way to "escape" all the terrible things coming on the world in the last days (see 1Th 1:10...; Rev 3:10...) Many believe that the means of "escape" for those who faithfully keep on praying is the rapture (see Jn 14:3...). Luke 21:36 (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

j. **The Ten Virgins:**

- i. **Matthew 25:1-13 (NKJV):** "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

- ii. **Parable of the Ten Virgins.** This parable (i.e., a brief story that makes a specific point or teaches a lesson) points out that all who believe in Christ

must constantly examine their own spiritual condition in light of Christ's coming at an unknown and unexpected time. They must remain true to their faith in Christ no matter what, so that when the day and hour arrive they will be ready for him and he will receive them when he returns (v. 10). Failure to be in a devoted personal relationship with the Lord when he returns will mean being left out of his kingdom.

- a. The difference between the foolish and the wise virgins is that the foolish failed to recognize that the returning Lord (see Jn 14:3...) would come unexpectedly, without obvious signs as the time approached (v. 13; see 24:36, 44...).
 - b. Christ indicates here and elsewhere (Lk 18:8) that a large portion of the church will be unprepared at the time of his return (vv. 8-13). He makes it clear that he will not wait until all churches and professing believers are prepared for his coming.
 - c. Notice that all the virgins (both faithful and unfaithful) were taken by surprise at the bridegroom's coming (vv. 5-7). This suggests that the parable of the ten virgins applies to believers living before the tribulation and not to those living during the tribulation, who will have adequate signs preceding Christ's return at the end of the tribulation... It seems that all the virgins may have at one time been ready for the groom to return, but the foolish failed to prepare for the wait. Perhaps they planned to take care of things later but instead they fell asleep. By the time they awoke, it was too late. This should serve as a challenge to all those who make a decision to follow Christ. That initial choice is one thing, but sticking to that decision and staying ready for Christ's return takes persistence and dedication. If Christians do not stay active and grow spiritually—or if they view his return as being distant—the sense of urgency will easily fade. However, if we maintain a high level of expectancy, we will be ready at a moment's notice.
 - d. The fact that both the faithful and the unfaithful “fell asleep” does not seem to be an issue in this story. In fact, if we are spiritually prepared, we can be at peace and enjoy rest in life. Then, when Jesus returns unexpectedly, we will be ready to go with him. (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)
- iii. **Oil.** Through a series of illustrations (ch. 25), Jesus stresses the requirement of faithfulness and watchfulness (i.e., readiness and expectancy) until he returns. The parable of the ten virgins stresses the necessity of spiritual perseverance and preparedness because of the reality of Christ's coming at an unforeseeable date (see Lk 21:19...). The oil in the parable represents true faith, a right relationship with God and the constant presence of the Holy

Spirit. In Scripture, oil is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence and power in a person's life. All true followers of Jesus can enjoy that presence. If we want to be ready, like the wise virgins, our lives need to be pure and full of the faith and righteousness that come only from God's Spirit... (Fire Bible: A Study Bible for Spirit-led Living, 2001)

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