



## **PART 5**

### **INTRODUCTION**

While popular culture gives us a stark image of a future post-apocalyptic world following some global disaster, the Bible actually says we are living in the end times now. Since Jesus began his public ministry and until He returns again, we are in the “last days”. What impact should that have on the way we live and what are our responsibilities as we await Christ’s return are topics Jesus addresses in the final sermon of Matthew, in chapters 24 and 25. Jesus took the opportunity to answer his disciples’ questions about the destruction of the temple and His future return by providing some signs, some warnings, and teaching about our responsibilities through four parables. His primary message is, be ready!

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are your responsibilities? What tasks has God given you to be responsible for?
2. If you knew Jesus was returning today, or in 10 days, how would you live differently? Since Jesus’ return will be unexpected, what does it mean for you to be ready?
3. Read Matt 24:45-51. Here the faithful servant is contrasted with the wicked servant, the main distinction being that when the master returns, the faithful servant is fulfilling his responsibilities while the wicked servant is not. Jesus teaches that we each have responsibilities to fulfil. What kind of servant are you? How are you tempted to lose patience as Christ delays His return?
4. Read Matt 25:1-13. Jesus tells the parable of the 10 virgins, all who fell asleep waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. The five wise virgins had extra oil and the five foolish virgins had to go buy oil as they ran out of oil. While they were buying oil, the bridegroom came and the foolish virgins were excluded from the wedding banquet. Jesus is teaching that we are personally responsible for our walk with God. What might the oil represent? What does it mean for you to have “extra” oil? How may you be trying to use someone else’s oil?
5. Read Matt 25:14-30. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, where He teaches that we are each personally responsible to grow up and maximize what we have been entrusted. In what areas do you need to invest and grow what God’s given you? What areas have you neglected or how may you be burying what God has given you instead of investing/sharing it with others?

6. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Do an inductive bible study (observations, interpretation and application). You can use the following as a guide:
- i. Posture your heart. Spend some time in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to be your teacher. Open your heart to the Lord to speak to you.
  - ii. Read the passage aloud
  - iii. Ask some context questions of the passage:
    - What sort of writing is this? (a letter, a poem, a narrative etc?)
    - Are there any clues about the circumstances under which it was written?
    - What has happened so far in this particular book of the Bible?
  - iv. Some observation questions of the passage:
    - Are there any major sub-sections or breaks in the passage?
    - What is the main point or points?
    - What surprises are there?
    - What are the key words? What words or ideas are repeated?
  - v. Some leading questions of the text:
    - How does this passage relate to other parts of the book?
    - How does the passage relate to Jesus?
    - What does this teach us about God?
    - How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?
  - vi. Some application questions of the passage:
    - How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?
    - Is there some attitude you need to change?
    - How does this passage call on me to change the way you live?

*Based on what you learned from this study, would you say you are a sheep or a goat? Why? How do you care for the least of those around you? What can you change in your daily routine to help you care for others?*

### **WHAT WOULD YOU DO?**

In light of Christ's promised return, we are called to live in a state of readiness marked by a clear understanding of our responsibilities: for our own walk, for our own growth and to maximize what He has given each of us. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the message is clear: we are to see Christ in the least of these and to meet their practical and spiritual needs. Such a life reflects a deep understanding of our responsibilities in light of Christ's return.

### **CHANGE YOUR MINDSET**

*The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me' (Matt 28:40)*