

OLIVET PROPHECY – Part 4

Harold Smith sermon on September 20, 1997

We have reviewed approximately half of the material which Jesus spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives just a few days prior to His crucifixion.

In our examination of this most famous of all prophecies, we have attempted to be as circumspect as possible; our goal being to see what God would have us glean both individually and collectively from this material about the end-time Church.

We will continue in this material, keeping in mind that being circumspect requires a certain amount of speculation as in any kind of prophetic material.

Beginning again in MAT 24, we will review vs. 34 in the CAS translation:

“Indeed, I can give you solemn assurance that this generation will not have passed away before all this has taken place.”

Some have attempted to interpret “this generation” to mean an exact group of years based upon other biblical events. A generation means 20 years to some, 40 or even 100 years to others. However, this is not what is implied in the scripture. The term “*this generation*” is referring to those alive during the time when all of these leaves have appeared on the tree. This term is also used twice in MAT 12:41-42:

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it,...

Clearly, the usage of this term in Chapter 12 shows that Jesus is speaking of those alive during the early part of the first century. He is not trying to apply a 40-year span of time, but refers to a certain group which is alive at a certain time. Continuing on in MAT 24:35:

Heaven and earth will pass away [those who want to believe that this earth will continue on forever in a physical state, are in direct contradiction to Christ’s words as well as REV 21 and 22], but My words [Jesus’ words] will by no means pass away.

All that Christ spoke from the Mount of Olives will indeed come to pass. Going on in vs. 36:

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

This statement is a response to the question asked in vs. 3, when the disciples asked “*Tell us, when will these things be?*” The answer is that of the day and hour, no one knows—not even

the angels of heaven. The overview of "the when" that they had referenced, was given in an overview by Jesus through vs. 31.

Through the remainder of this chapter, Christ goes back and fills in specific details to help His end time disciples clearly ascertain when they have arrived at the day and the hour. The reference that He makes to "*that day and hour*" does not concern the actual return of Jesus Christ but to the time when the final countdown begins that leads up to His return—when the 1335 days begins. Going on in vs. 37 in the CAS translation:

Just as things were in the time of Noah, so they will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

The time of Noah—this statement prefaces all that follows through MAT 25:13, and is given in response to the remainder of the question that the disciples asked in vs. 3 when they asked "*what will be the sign of Your coming?*"

The disciples wanted to know what to look for to understand when Christ's return was imminent. This question does not pertain to the trumpet plagues, but rather to the keys that will pinpoint the beginning of the final events leading up to Christ's return. Look at vss. 38-39 in the JNT:

Back then, before the Flood, people went on eating and drinking, taking wives and becoming wives, right up till the day Noah entered the ark; and they didn't know what was happening until the Flood came and swept them all away It will be just like that when the Son of Man comes.

In LUK 17, we are given material which parallels the Olivet Prophecy; do not assume that Christ only spoke this material once to His disciples—any teacher knows that you have to repeat yourself to make the material understood. So looking at the parallel material in LUK 17:26-30:

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise [notice the addition here of the example of Lot] 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.

Christ tells us that the end time setting will be exactly like the days prior to the Flood in Noah's day, and like the days prior to the destruction of Sodom in Lot's day; life was going on as usual, there was nothing different than normal until the day that God's intervention arrived.

We have the material in Genesis to tell us what it was like before the Flood. Conditions will be very similar—the entire scenario for when the bottom falls out is going to be very much the same. Beginning in GEN 6:11:

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

This is a very accurate description of our world today. The earth was filled with violence then, and the earth is filled with violence today. But notice that corruption is also mentioned. Continuing on in vs. 12 in the KJV:

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth

Now as we have covered before, the "his" could be a reference to God's way or it could be a reference to man's way; there is no way to say it can only mean one way or the other, so the best way to view it is that it means both. God's way was corrupt: men were not keeping the 10 commandments in that world even though the evidence of God was there—Adam lived through almost half of the pre-Flood world history, and legend has it that there were still cherubim guarding the Garden up until the Flood.

God tells us in the book of Romans of when they knew God, of course this is about the Greek world but this would be indicative of any people at any point in time. Looking at ROM 1:21-23:

because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

God gave them over to uncleanness, to the sinful desires of their hearts and to sexual impurity to dishonor their bodies between themselves. It even goes on to say in later verses that God gave them up to vile affections where even their men and women exchanged their natural relations for unnatural. That talks about the homosexuality, the perversion, the corruption that occurred in the Greek world that also occurred in the pre-Flood world. Going on in GEN 6:13:

And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

So God erased all the human beings except for eight people. In the days of Lot, we find once again that there was a problem with corruption which led God to destroy the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim (the other two cities of the plain). Looking at GEN 18:20:

And the LORD [the Word of the Old Testament, the one who became Christ and is now speaking to Abraham] ***said, "Because***

the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

"*Their sin*" is found in GEN 19:4-5:

***Now before they* [Lot's family and the two angels] *lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter* [people from all positions in society, rich or poor, it did not matter], *surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally* [TLB correctly paraphrases this: 'Bring out those men to us so we can rape them.']. "**

The very grievous sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was homosexuality; it was rampant throughout that society, and God destroyed all the cities of the plain because of that sin. Our world is the same: it is filled with violence, it is filled with homosexuality.

In listening to a program recently, statistics were given that in prime time television, there were 31 homosexuals versus 5 religious people; it is treated as normal and it is not. God says it is perversion and corruption and yet there are young people today who go to school and think it is perfectly normal. They are being brainwashed by television and movies, brainwashed by our society to think it is normal, when it is corrupt.

This is how degenerate our society is. This is where we are—firmly in the corruption of Noah's day and in the very grievous sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. Major corruption was extant at both times just like it is today; but in spite of that corruption, there was nothing out of the ordinary—there were no earth-shattering events. There was no indication of the soon-coming doom on both of those societies and civilizations.

However, during the time that Noah was preparing the Ark, he was preaching a warning to the world of his day. We also find that when Lot was told to leave, he tried to warn his married daughters and sons-in-law. These warnings were not heeded—the people of that time were not willing to take action, and were therefore caught unaware when destruction came. This tells us, the disciples of Jesus Christ, that if we do not heed the warnings that He has given us, we can also be caught unaware; but even more, this tells us that the "when" asked about in vs. 3 will come suddenly; we will not see any great heavenly signs when these things start to happen.

At this point in Luke's account (going back to LUK 17), he inserts a warning given to those who are to flee when the signs appear; when they start to appear, it is necessary for God's people to flee. So Luke inserts this warning in vs. 31-32:

In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

Please note that in this parallel account, Luke does not record Christ mentioning those in Judea as it is in MAT 24. There is only an admonition that when the warning comes to pass, it is necessary to take immediate action. So this may or may not be a reference to that second time of flight but rather the first time of flight that we read about in ZEP 2:1 ("gather yourselves together, yes gather together").

We also find that Christ refers to the example of Lot's wife. Lot's wife is a valuable lesson to us—what she did or did not do is of critical importance to us. The action of Lot's wife, which was failure to obey God's instruction/warning, cost her her life. Note GEN 19:17:

So it came to pass, when they [the two angels] had brought them [Lot, his wife and two daughters] outside [of the city], that he [one of the angels] said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

That was the warning: do not linger, do not drag your feet—you must take action, and you must take action now. Jumping ahead to vs. 26:

But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Not only did Lot's wife disobey God's instructions, she was also guilty of wanting to preserve the life that she had in Sodom, as Jesus goes on to allude to in LUK 17:33, as we see in the CAS translation:

The truth is that the man whose aim is to preserve his own life is the one that will lose it. It is he who loses it who will keep it safe, and live.

This warning in vs. 33, as well as the reference to Lot's wife, is to all those who want to try and figure out on their own—those who have made themselves the final authority—rather than surrendering their intellectual vanity, their self-sufficiency, and looking to God by leaning on His word to reveal to them the proper course of action.

There are numerous people today who have nothing to do with God's Church who are stockpiling nitrogen-packed foods, weapons and ammunition and hoarding them in places that they have dug out for themselves. They figured out on their own what it will take to survive. God says "NO!"; you seek to preserve your own life and you will not find protection, you will not survive. There is only one place that God is offering protection and it will require leaning on the word of God to know when and where. This is the reason for what He says in MAT 24:40-41:

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken [Greek: "to receive near"] and the other left [Greek: "left behind" or "forsaken"]. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.

These two verses depict two individuals who were joined in a common task: they are laboring to do exactly the same thing. The lesson is from what He tells us in these two verses: physical involvement alone will not be enough to survive what is to come. Just to join a particular group or organization is not enough. The spiritual state of each individual, especially faith in the word of truth, in the word of God, is what determines who will be received near into God's nourishment for those 3½ years. It will require a spiritual state of mind, not a physical belonging. Luke goes further into this particular event in 17:34-36:

I tell you, in that night there will be two men [the Greek simply has "two", "men" was added by the translators] in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women [the same situation in the Greek here—this is not depicting either sex, it is simply talking about two individuals] will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.

We find here that Luke adds *two in bed*, which is omitted in MAT 24. After relating these three scenarios, each showing two individuals in a common endeavor, Luke records the obvious question that would be posed by the disciples in vs. 37:

And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord? [where is it that they are received near?]" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

Please note that the statement Jesus gives here is used differently in Matthew's account of the Olivet prophecy. Here, His response is in regard to the location of those that are received near—they are where the body is gathered together. MAT 24:28 is a response to His earlier scenario of false christs and false prophets deceiving all but the very elect:

For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

Remember, there will be a false prophet who will be able to work all kinds of miracles which will be able to convince almost all of mankind that this is the prophet and the Christ that is to appear. Going back to MAT 24:26:

Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it.

God will not allow the devil to counterfeit the actual return of Christ—a return appearing in the clouds of heaven. That is the reason Jesus warns us against believing those who might say He has already returned. We will know exactly when He returns, just as there is no mistaking lightning from the east to the west across the entire sky.

The saying "*wherever the carcass is there will the eagles be gathered together*" is defined later when Jesus goes on to explain that He will send out His angels with the sound of a trumpet

and they will gather His elect all together in one place. The whole body of Christ will be gathered together at the time of His return.

Yet, LUK 17 is in response to a different scenario—when certain ones are received near. The indication here is that all who are received near converge into one area, forming one collective body in her place in the wilderness. Luke is talking about going into the place, the one and only place of protection. MAT 24 is using the saying in a different way, but Jesus undoubtedly spoke of these two events at different times, and He sometimes used a particular example in a dual sense. Continuing on in MAT 24:42:

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

What is the emphasis? To watch! Going in vs. 43:

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.

We are to watch—watch for what? Again, going back to vs. 32 to the introduction of this whole passage we find for what we are to watch: we are to watch for the leafing out of the fig tree because when it is leafed out we know that it is at the door; He is at the door. When everything that Jesus warned of has occurred, we must be prepared and ready to take action. We cannot wait until we finally see this point before getting ready—no, we must be ready all the time, we must be like a Boy Scout, be prepared all the time. This is what Jesus Christ is saying!

Until the sequence of end time events begins to unfold, we do not know when the beginning of the end starts. He has not given us any dates to which we can attach any significance; we must simply watch for those leaves to start popping out on that tree and when that tree is leafed out we will know. What Jesus said here was taken by the Apostle Paul and elaborated on in 1TH 5:1-3:

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord [when the scenario of end time events begins to unfold] so comes as a thief in the night [PHL: "for the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night"]. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

When the true labor pains come, labor will not stop until the birth has happened. When these events begin to unfold, their uninterrupted sequence will be just as certain as birth. Nothing will stop the labor pains once the child has entered into the birth canal. Likewise, once the end time events enter into God's appointed time of fulfillment, nothing will prevent their completion. Going on in vss. 4-5:

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

A thief does not come to rob and to take when he knows that people are awake and watchful; he comes when they are either gone or asleep. Back then to MAT 24:44:

Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

This instruction is primarily about being spiritually ready and physically prepared when the time comes to take action. The apostles to whom Jesus spoke this information, thought that He would return in their day. Obviously the hour (over 1900 years later) would be a time that they would not have expected. But this was not just to the disciples of that time: He also spoke this to the end time disciples. We are to be in a constant state of readiness by following Christ's instructions during the time that we are watching. This is what He means by being ready.

Jesus elaborates further on this in the final parable spoken on the Mount of Olives (beginning in 25:31). He talks about separating the sheep and the goats because the goats did not do certain things: feeding Him when He was hungry, clothing Him when He was in need, visiting Him when He was in prison, etc. Being ready entails spiritual readiness as well as being physically prepared; He is including both points and principles here.

Now again, this material was given to Christ's disciples. He tells His disciples that the beginning of the end would come at a time they simply would not expect because there will not be any great heavenly signs when this happens. Continuing on in MAT 24:45 via the JNT:

"Who is the faithful and sensible [KJV: "wise"] servant whose master puts him in charge of the household staff, to give them their food at the proper time?"

Notice, here is one who is to be a leader among the household—giving others their food in the proper time. That is, to properly feed them as Paul tells Timothy (2TI 4:2)—"*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.*" That is an obligation the ministry has. Going ahead in the JNT in vss. 46-47:

It will go well with that servant if he is found doing his job when his master comes. Yes, I tell you that he will put him in charge of all he owns.

This instruction shows how important it is for the ministry to emphasize watching and preparing. Jesus elaborates more on this later in the Olivet prophecy when He gives the parable of the talents to show how important it is to know that when we are given more, more is expected; for the one who is over the household staff, more is expected of him than someone who is lower down the ladder of responsibility and is maybe in charge of the garden. In vs. 48:

But if that evil servant [not the faithful and wise servant that was in charge of the household staff, but an evil servant in the same position] ***says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'***

We find in 2PE 3:1-2 that Peter expands the point that Jesus is making in the Olivet Prophecy:

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,

Peter is obviously referencing both Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the Olivet Prophecy. Peter wrote this later. These other accounts existed early on in the Church, and were well known. Continuing in vss. 3-4:

knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts [their own desires and agendas—they are not interested in what God wants], ***and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."***

Note: "*where is the promise of His coming.*" They have not seen any evidence that the end is as close as what the Church has been told. This is what the evil servant said in MAT 24:48, and as we know—out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. So whatever the evil servant thinks will eventually come out through his mouth. This verse describes an event which is to take place at the close of the age. This is a warning of an evil servant, which could be construed to be one of the buds on the fig tree.

It is interesting to note that Herbert Armstrong died having heavily emphasized the closeness of the end of the age and the need for the Church to be ready. If you review the material he wrote over the last three or four years of his life, there was a heavy emphasis on the Church, the bride, to make herself ready. Even though he was condemned for it, it was highly biblical because Christ says that the faithful and wise servant will do what He commands—in this case, to tell His people to watch and be ready, and so there was a faithful and wise servant who was put in charge of the household staff and certainly fed the servants of God the proper food at the proper time. He did his job well, maybe not perfectly, but he did it well.

We are also told here in MAT 24:48 that an evil servant will arise—one who will arise and direct God's people away from the urgency stressed by the wise and faithful servant. There is to be one at the end of the age. Looking at MAT 24:49:

"and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,

So the first step, of course, is to beat his fellow servants—an event which could be considered the opening of one of those buds on the fig tree. A Church leader, one who is in charge of the

household staff was to come and strike at his fellow servants in the ministry if they refused to believe him and support his “new” teachings. This is what the prophecy is telling us. I can speak from personal experience, having scars, scratches, and bruises, that indeed there was a man who struck at fellow servants because they refused to teach his “new” teachings.

Then we are told that once he strikes his fellow servants, once he gets those out of the way who stand in opposition, then he will finally lay out his desires which 2PE 3 records. So this individual was to outwardly and arrogantly announce his true intentions—in this case, to turn to the teachings of the harlot church. Look at REV 17, beginning midway in vs. 1:

... “Come, I will show you the judgment [NIV: “punishment”] of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

He goes on to describe this harlot, this fallen woman, in vs. 2:

with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth [not just a few people, but widespread upon the earth] were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

This false church, this harlot church, is to have a dynamic influence, and yet this evil servant thought that was great. John goes on with his description of the woman in vss. 4-5:

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The famous abominations in this golden cup of the harlot church are the Trinity, the immortal soul, and open rejection of both the second and fourth commandments. If you do not read that, then read the Bible produced by the scholars of the harlot church: the second commandment is simply obliterated and the ninth commandment is rewritten—open rejection of the second commandment. Of course, the need to worship on the first day of the week, the day of the sun; that is a very important doctrine, so important that the harlot church readily admits and takes full credit for replacing the 7th day Sabbath with Sunday worship. These are some of the abominations and filthiness of the harlot church.

This evil servant who was to go to the table of demons (1CO 10:21) claims to be a spiritual Jew—one of the true Church of God—but his actions speak otherwise. He was not a spiritual Jew after all, and his actions are to be responsible for helping to fulfill a very important prophecy for the final days of this age recorded in REV 3:7, which is directed to the Church of Philadelphia. Look at REV 3:8:

“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have

kept My word, and have not denied My name [they have not refused His authority].

The emphasis is that it would be very difficult to keep the word. He is primarily talking about the authority of scripture—God’s authority. Continuing on in vs. 9:

Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan [those who have attempted to stop others from keeping God’s word], ***who say they are Jews*** [that they are of the true Church] ***and are not, but lie....***

This is a very important scripture for us to understand—it is something that had to happen toward the close of the age. The activity of the evil servant of MAT 24 would bring the synagogue of Satan into contact with the fellowship of the sixth era of God’s Church. This is very important for the fulfillment of prophecy. Without question, when Jesus spoke about this evil servant, it was a reference to that synagogue of Satan.

There is also a spiritual drunkenness that involves intellectualism and self-sufficiency apart from the drunkenness of the harlot church. Intellectualism exists everywhere—all you have to do is read postings on the Internet by various self-proclaimed authorities; they did not need to be ordained into the ministry—they ordained themselves. They are self-proclaimed, self-professed teachers, and this self-sufficiency has rubbed off on others to the point that they do not need to meet anywhere, they do not need to fellowship with anybody else, etc.

We are in the Laodicean era—the final era; this does not mean that we have to be Laodicean—we should be more like the sixth era as far as individual spirituality. Laodicea is the way the world is—rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing. “Nobody can tell me what to do” is the attitude prevalent in the world today and is, unfortunately, also the attitude of too many of God’s people, or those who were God’s people. Going back to MAT 24:50-51:

the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We are told in these last two verses that God will deal harshly with anyone in a position of leadership over His Church who undermines the faith of His chosen ones.

As previously mentioned, the Olivet Prophecy continues on in Chapter 25, and is divided into three separate parables. The first of these parables helps explain “those who read and understand” from 24:15, as well as explaining why one is taken and another is left behind from 24:40. Beginning then in MAT 25:1:

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

From the outset, understand that the term "*kingdom of heaven*" here refers not to the literal Kingdom of heaven or the literal Kingdom of God, but to either the subjects of that kingdom, or to the steps taken by God in the establishment of that kingdom.

In this particular situation, the latter is the way this is to be viewed. This is talking about one of the final steps God takes in the establishment of His kingdom. Now, the virgins are those who are without blemish—Christians who have repented and come under the blood of the Savior Jesus Christ; they are under the grace of God, and since they have no sin attributed, they are without blemish.

The lamps these virgins take symbolize God's word—as David said in PSA 119:105, "*God's word is a lamp unto my feet.*" A lamp provides the light to know where to go and what to do. So these virgins set out together just like the two in the field, the two grinding grain, and the two in the bed. They are all physically united to a degree, endeavoring to do the same thing; perhaps they are not physically side-by-side, but they are all physically endeavoring to watch for the coming of Jesus Christ. Continuing on in vs. 2:

Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish [Greek: "moros," meaning "dull witted: or "one who does not take heed"—one who does not heed is a fool, and is unprepared].

In MAT 24:15, Jesus stated that whoever reads Daniel the prophet should understand. When we go back to DAN 12:10, we find that the wicked shall do wickedly and none of the wicked shall understand but the wise shall understand. These wise are the ones to whom Jesus referred. Going on in the JNT for vss. 3-4:

The foolish ones took lamps with them but no oil, whereas the others took flasks of oil with their lamps.

The foolish ones represent those who do not heed Christ's warning to watch and stay ready. The use of lamps emphasizes the need to utilize God's word in watching. The Bible must be an integral part of watching! If we do not have our noses in God's word and use that lamp, then we will not succeed in correctly and properly watching as Jesus commands us.

Oil illustrates the energy source needed to properly fuel the lamps; in this case, it represents God's spirit. Paul tells us in 2PE 1:7 that the spirit is the spirit of power and love and a sound mind. A sound mind is a mind that will take heed and therefore take warning. The foolish think that they have sufficient oil when they begin watching, but in reality are not prepared for a lengthy wait. The wise are prepared for an undefined duration of time, taking flasks of oil—relying on a power outside themselves. The fools are those Jesus condemned in LUK 17:33—those who think they can save their own lives. Continuing on in vs. 5 in the NIV:

The bridegroom was a long time in coming [He did not come when they expected], ***and they all became drowsy*** [NKJ: "slumbered"] ***and fell asleep.***

Notice that even the wise are affected by their mortality, by the fact that they are flesh and blood. It is possible to stay physically sharp for only a temporary period of time before the flesh begins to tire. Why does God have us meet once a week on the Sabbath? Because we are mortal and we start to run out—we need to regroup so we can get a spiritual boost and are ready to go again.

Yes, God knows our mortality—we are like blades of grass that spring up today and are gone tomorrow, a flower that blooms today and is gone before the sun sets. God is not saying that the wise are perfect because they are not. These ten virgins symbolize the end time disciples who are greatly anticipating the return of Jesus Christ; they all failed to watch without ceasing however—even the wise. They let their guard down because the faithful and wise servant who emphasized “be watchful and ready” was gone, and another servant came along who said “we do not really need to be so concerned with that,” so while the wise ceased to watch, the evil servant rose up and began to eat and drink with the harlot church and then, continuing in vs. 6:

And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'

The middle of the night would be the most unexpected time. Dignitaries do not often come in the dark of night, but during the day when people can be there to receive them. The key point here is that each disciple must be in a state of readiness at all times, fully-clothed and prepared to go at a moment's notice. Going on in the PHL translation in vs. 7:

Then up got all the bridesmaids [NKJ: "virgins"] and attended to their lamps.

The wise realized that they needed to fill theirs up, so they ran to God and asked for some help and they had oil. Remember that the foolish did not have the extra oil that they needed. So once the disciples were jolted out of their sleep, it was imperative that they turn the light up on the lamps so they could see and know what it was they were to do. Had the foolish not neglected their lamps a long time before, they would have been wise enough to bring extra oil. Since they were not using their lamps, they did not realize what it took to keep them running and did not have what was necessary when the time came. The proper course of action is laid out in God's word concerning what to do when that time comes, but it requires the spirit to empower that lamp. Millions upon millions of people have these lamps but they do not have the power to turn them on to see what it actually says. Looking at vss. 8-9:

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.'

The foolish simply were not ready when it was necessary to be ready; the wise prudently point out that **being prepared is an individual responsibility**. We cannot rely on someone else to prepare us. Going on in vs. 10:

"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.

The only ones who will escape the tribulation in a place of protection, the only ones who will participate in the marriage supper after the Seventh Trumpet will be those who have heeded the admonition to watch and to be ready at the time when these events happen. Look at REV 19:7:

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage [NIV: "wedding"] of the Lamb has come, and His wife [NIV: "His bride"] has made herself ready."

There it is again: Christ tells us to be ready. There are those who will be ready, who will know what to do, who will be able to use the word as a lamp to know where to go and what to do at the appropriate time and there will be those who do not. Continuing on in MAT 25:11-12:

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.'

The foolish depict all who attempt to attach themselves in a physical relationship with the wise: just like the two grinding grain, the two in the field, the two in bed. In MAT 7:21-23, Jesus made the statement that He has no relationship with anyone who does not do the will of God. It does not matter what individuals have done on their own, under their own power.

Physical works, without fulfilling God's will in watching and preparing, is futility. It is this futility where the foolish made their mistake in this parable. Look at vs. 13:

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

He concludes this from where we started in MAT 24:36. We do not know the day or the hour in which the Son of Man is coming, so we need to watch—watch for the leafing of the fig tree. Please note that it does not say here that the foolish are cut off, they are just not able to come to this location—those who buy gold tried in the fire come out of Great Tribulation and are partakers in the Marriage Feast.

So the indication here is that this is not referring to Christ's return. The focus of this parable involves the time when the woman is to go into the place of refuge and that only those who are watching and preparing will be the part of the woman allowed to go there. According to this parable we need to study the keys of the Olivet Prophecy illuminated by the lamp of God so that we are prepared when the day and the hour arrives.

Hopefully, we will all keep a close watch on the admonitions that Jesus has given us in the prophecies contained within MAT 24 and 25, because the basic keys to knowing the times and understanding the actions which we will need to take are all contained within the framework of the Olivet Prophecy.