



Be Prepared

Matthew 25:1-13

Introduction

Ever since Jesus ascended in His glorified state to sit at the right hand of the Father's throne in heaven, people have been waiting for His return. There seemed to be an expectation at the beginning of the Church age that Jesus would return imminently – even in the lifetime of those who had been alive to see Jesus walking through the towns and villages of Galilee. In every century since then, there have been times when there has been a heightened sense of anticipation as people interpreted world events as signs pointing to Jesus' return.

In the last few years we have witnessed many conflicts, famines and natural disasters. Western society has become increasingly godless – the economic crisis has exposed the greed and selfishness underpinning our banking system and the MPs expenses scandal brought us face to face with deep dishonesty at the heart of our own government. In this year we have seen devastation in Haiti, Chile and China (and elsewhere) as huge earthquakes have brought nations to their knees...and in the last week we have witnessed the

What does everyone agree on?

- Jesus will come suddenly and unexpectedly
- His return will be glorious – every eye will see
- He will come on the clouds
- With an angelic trumpet call
- He is coming for those who are His own
- He will judge both the living and the dead
- It will signal the end

unbelievable spectacle of a volcanic eruption in Iceland grounding every plane in the UK and stranding UK citizens all around the world.

Are these signs of the second coming of Jesus? Some would say 'yes', others would say 'no, we've been here before'. Do we need to know when Jesus is coming back? Is it important to know what will happen when He does come back?

Some Christians feel that the study of the End Times (called Eschatology) is a theological minefield and would rather steer clear of it. They are put-off by the numerous

(and often confusing) interpretations of what the Bible says on the subject. Jesus, however, obviously wanted us to carefully consider His second coming based on the amount of time he devoted to teaching about it. Numerous Old Testament and New Testament passages also encourage us to fix our hope on that day (1 Thess 4:13-18). So

we should sincerely seek to understand what the Bible teaches on the End Times but approach the whole subject with a measure of humility, recognising that many great men and women of the Faith, through-out the centuries, have held differing views on this subject based on their interpretation of some difficult-to-understand passages.

Life Group questions...

- 1. Share with the group a time when you didn't prepare properly for something or weren't ready in time for something.**
- 2. Read Matthew 25:1-13 together. Where was this parable being told and who was Jesus speaking to? Is this parable linked in with anything else he was saying before and after?**
- 3. Who do you think the main characters represent? What do you think is the significance of the oil and the lamps?**
- 4. Read vs2-4. Jesus said that five of the virgins were 'wise' and five were 'foolish' based on how they prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. Who is Jesus warning to 'be prepared' for His coming?**
- 5. Read v5. How do we stop ourselves and our church from falling asleep (spiritually)?**
- 6. Read vs6-7. The Bridegroom returned suddenly and some of the virgins weren't ready. Is it possible to know when Jesus will return? (Compare Luke 12:39-40 and Matthew 24:1-14.)**
- 7. In 1 Thess 4:18, Paul tells the believers in Thessalonika to 'encourage one another' by discussing the return of Jesus. Why do you think Paul said this? How can we become better at doing this as a church?7**
- 8. Read Matt 25:13. What difference should Jesus' return make to how we live our lives today?**