

Preparation for the End Time

Matthew 24 and 25

Lesson #7 for May 19, 2018

Scriptures: Matthew 7:24-27; 24:1-25; 25:1-30; Revelation 13:11-17; Luke 21:20.

1. During His last visit to the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus made the startling statement that “not a single stone here will be left in its place.” (Matthew 24:1, *GNB**) As soon as the disciples had an opportunity, they asked Jesus when these things would happen. In His answer as recorded in Matthew 24&25, Jesus mingled the events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem with the events that will happen as we approach the second coming of Jesus. But, the purpose was not just to scare the disciples who would never see those final events of this earth’s history, but rather, to warn us how to prepare ourselves. In this lesson we will try to see how the events affecting the Jewish nation following the death of Jesus should help us to prepare for the final days just before us.
2. In addition to the traditional signs that had been given all the way back in the Old Testament in Joel 2:10—the sun darkening, the moon turning to blood, and the stars falling—Jesus warned that as we approach the end there will be wars, rumors of wars, pestilence, false christs, and persecution. Satan knows that his time is up, and he will cause a terrible series of events to try to prevent the return of Jesus from happening.
3. We need to remember that the only prophecies in the Bible that have not yet been fulfilled are those directly connected to the second coming of Jesus Christ and later events like heaven and the third coming. Could a false christ or false prophet show up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Where would Satan most like to sow confusion? So, what should we be doing to prepare ourselves for what is coming?
4. Read Matthew 24:1-25. Very difficult times are coming for planet Earth. Satan is desperate to keep God’s final end-time people from forming because if they do form, it will be the beginning of the end for him. Thus, he will do everything that he can to deceive, confuse, and destroy God’s faithful people.
5. Christians have been warned about the coming of false christs and false prophets. When we hear about such people, we generally dismiss them with a smile. But, the number of such people is increasing. There was an entire article in the *National Geographic* magazine for August 2017 entitled “Self-Styled Messiahs.” Did they have any idea that they were foreshadowing the second coming of Jesus? The important thing when we see such things happening is not to be deceived ourselves. Down through the ages, various things have occurred which have caused people to think that the world was going to become a much better place. But, that is not what Jesus predicted. In fact, we see that His predictions are being fulfilled every day.
6. So, what was the purpose of His warning us? See Matthew 24:25; John 13:19; 14:29; 16:4. Jesus made it clear that the purpose of prophecy is not so that we can predict precisely in advance what is coming, but rather, so that we may know, when those things happen that have been predicted, that God was fully aware in advance about what was coming. It is never God’s plan to leave His people in the dark. He always warns us in advance. Unfortunately, many of us are not aware of, or choose to ignore, the warnings. Careful Bible students have been aware for some time that there are very close parallels among Daniel 7; Matthew 24:9-11; and Revelation 13:11-17. Terrible times of persecution and deception are just before us. The Devil would like to eliminate all of God’s faithful people from this earth so he could claim this earth as his dominion.

7. Read Matthew 24:13: “But whoever holds out to the end will be saved.”—*Good News Bible*.*
8. Ellen White put it in these words.

None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God’s immutable word? Are we prepared to stand firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 593.2-594.0.

9. Are we grounding and fortifying our minds in preparation? Jesus closed His Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 7:24-27 with a fearful warning. There is more to be done than just to be intellectually aware of future events. We must live according to the instructions Jesus gave us. As noted below, a casual reading of Scripture will not save us or prepare us for the time when we will stand “singly and alone.”

I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. **When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they knew not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth.** Certain it is that there has been among us a departure from the living God and a turning to men, putting human in place of divine wisdom.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 707.2; *CWE** 39.3; *AG** 30.3; *GW** 298.3; *LDE** 70.1; *Mar** 45.2. [Bold type is added.]

10. Read Matthew 24:15. This verse should be compared with Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11. The *abomination of desolation* sometimes called the *awful horror* in the prophecies of Daniel was **spoken of by Jesus as a future event**. While many critical scholars and some Christians believe that these words were fulfilled in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes in 168-165 B.C., Jesus stated that the fulfillment of these prophecies was still future in His day.

Various interpretations have been given of the “abomination of desolation.” Writing after A.D. 70, the Jewish historian Josephus applies the prophecies of Daniel relating to the “abomination of desolation” to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who set out to obliterate every trace of the Jewish religion and who in the year 168 B.C. plundered the Temple, suspended its services, and desecrated the altar of burnt offering by erecting an idol altar upon it whereon he caused swine to be offered. This state of affairs continued for at least three full years, until Judas Maccabeus rallied his fellow Jews and repulsed the forces of Antiochus. Thereupon the Temple was “cleansed”—the idol altar removed, a new altar erected in its place, and the “daily sacrifice” reinstated (*Jos. Ant.* x. 11. 7; xii. 5. 3, 4; 7. 6, 7; *War* I. 1. 1, 2). **The writer of 1 Macc (probably c. 100 B.C.), who records the attempts of Antiochus to Hellenize the Jews and the**

valorous exploits of Judas Maccabeus and his successors (1 Macc 1:20–64; 4:36–60; 6:7), was apparently familiar with the book of Daniel. He does not state that these events are fulfillments of Daniel’s prophecies, nor does he apparently apply any of the time periods to the persecution by Antiochus, for he stresses the duration as exactly 3 years. However, he uses the same Greek words for “abomination,” “desolation,” “cleansed,” “daily,” and other key expressions as appear in the *LXX* of Daniel, which is thought to have been translated c. 150 B.C., about the time these events occurred.

Our Lord used the expression “abomination of desolation” with reference to the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Mt 24:15-20; cf. Lk 21:20-24). Numerous Protestant interpreters, understanding these prophecies of Daniel to refer to the opposition of papal Rome to true Christians as well as that of pagan Rome toward the Jews, have applied the “abomination of desolation” to such papal practices as the confessional and the sacrifice of the mass. (see *SDACom* 4:842, 843, 873–877)—Horn, S. H. (1979). “Abomination of Desolation.” In *SDA Bible Dictionary 7-8. Review and Herald Publishing Association. [Bold type is added.]**

11. When God spoke of *abomination of desolation* or *awful horror*, He was talking about things like idolatry (Deuteronomy 27:15) or even immoral sexual practices (Leviticus 18:22). So, in the context of Daniel and Matthew, certainly, He was speaking about some sort of serious religious apostasy.
12. **Luke 21:20**: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that it will soon be destroyed.”—*Good News Bible** (Luke 21:20).
13. Read together with Matthew 24:15, this verse should make it clear that Jesus was very specifically talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. But, clearly, He was also looking *forward* to the more terrible and widespread destruction far in the future.

Christ saw in Jerusalem a symbol of the world hardened in unbelief and rebellion, and hastening on to meet the retributive judgments of God.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 22.1.

What are God’s retributive judgments?

14. Read Daniel 12:11 and 11:31. In these verses the *abomination of desolation* clearly appears in connection with an alternative system of mediation and salvation set up by the “little horn,” referring to the later phases of Roman domination in the religious world.
15. Read Daniel 8:9-12. This little horn shows a rapid, horizontal expansion in verse 9; and then, in a second phase noted in verses 10-12, it seeks to reach into heaven, persecuting God’s people and seeking to change God’s plan for His people. But, God will not sit quietly doing nothing. A judgment scene will take place, (Daniel 7:9-10) and there will be a cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, (Daniel 8:14) and there will be many signs even in the heavens. (Matthew 24:29) These things will warn God’s people of what is coming.
16. Read Matthew 25:1-13. The parable of the ten virgins is not only a serious warning but also it helps us to understand how to prepare ourselves. We need an adequate supply of the oil of the Holy Spirit. There are a couple of very important things to notice about this parable. First of all, all of the ten virgins prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. But, there was a delay. All ten of them slept. But, because of the delay, all of their lamps were going out. Five

had prepared themselves by bringing extra oil, and five had not. Will we be among those who are prepared by carefully storing up truth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. **The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. [1] They do not know God. [2] They have not studied His character; [3] they have not held communion with Him; therefore [4] they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. [5] Their service to God degenerates into a form.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 411.1. [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

17. Christian character is built by Bible study, prayer, and witnessing. Are we faithfully doing all of those things? We need to be witnesses not only by living true Christian lives but also by being prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks us. (1 Peter 3:15)
18. Read Matthew 25:14-30. In this parable of the talents, we see two servants who faithfully obeyed their master's wishes. The third servant wasted his master's means. Is God telling us that those who use their gifts correctly will be rewarded with a place in heaven? Clearly, those who do not wisely use their gifts will not be there.
19. What parallels do you see between the two parables recorded in Matthew 25? Both are clearly talking about preparation for the return of Christ. Both talk about groups that are prepared and groups that are not. And both show the spiritual fate of those who are and of those who are not. We need to study and study like our lives depend on it.
20. So, what are modern equivalents of the talents given to the three servants? Every ability that we have is given to us by God. These talents are to be used not only for our own personal benefit but also for the benefit of God and His people/church. And, one day, God will come to ask us what we have done with our talents. If your picture of God has not changed and grown in the last year, you are worshiping a graven image.
21. Take a careful look at the places where Paul discussed spiritual gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:1-11,28-31; Ephesians 4:11) God has promised that those who faithfully use the talents He has given them will be rewarded with additional talents. Those who do not use their talents are described by Jesus as "wicked and lazy." (Matthew 25:26, NKJV*)
22. We may feel that we have not been given any major talent. But, what does God tell us?

It was the one with the smallest gift who left his talent unimproved. In this is given a warning to all who feel that the smallness of their endowments excuses them from service for Christ. If they could do some great thing, how gladly would they undertake it; but because they can serve only in little things, they think themselves justified in doing nothing. In this they err. The Lord in His distribution of gifts is testing character. The man who neglected to improve his talent proved himself an unfaithful servant. Had he received five talents, he would have buried them as he buried the one. His misuse of the one talent showed that he despised the gifts of heaven.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.” Luke 16:10. The importance of the little things is often underrated because they are small; but they supply much of the actual discipline of life. There are really no nonessentials in the Christian’s life. Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things.—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons** 355.3-356.1.

23. Could our foolishness like that of the “virgins” delay the coming of the Lord?
24. Read Matthew 24:23-25,31; Romans 8:33; and Colossians 3:12. You may wonder if you are one of the members of God’s “elect.” What does *elect* mean? God would like to save everyone. But, He knows that is not possible. The great controversy would just be perpetuated in heaven! So, God “can” or will take to heaven only His faithful, chosen ones who do what He has asked them to do.
25. So, are we getting prepared? Are we fully aware of the details of the prophetic calendar? Have we recognize the signs of the end? Are we fully aware of Satan’s deceptions? Are we still sleeping? What should we be doing in our personal lives to prepare for His coming? What should we be doing to help prepare others for His coming?
26. Repeatedly, we have been warned that a time of shaking and persecution is coming. The Devil will shake out everyone whom he possibly can. Are we “seeking first the kingdom of God”? (Matthew 6:33)
27. Nevertheless, we cannot be frightened into heaven.

The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us through fear to right action? This ought not to be. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life.—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* August 2, 1881, par. 6; *TMK** 320.3. [Bold type is added.]

28. Do you have a sense that Adventists have been crying: “Wolf! Wolf!” for so long that nobody believes us anymore? Is it still appropriate for us to speak about the soon coming of Jesus Christ since we have been doing so for over 170 years already?
29. How should we, in turn, warn others? Look at Jesus’s methods. He did not come on with a powerful presentation and strong statements about what was coming. Instead, He asked questions. (Matthew 24:2) Then, when they were listening attentively, He spoke to them about the future. Jesus began by referring to a prophecy with which they were all familiar. (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27) Then, He challenged them to read and understand.
30. We know that a terrible time is coming. Review Matthew 24:15-28. When Jesus spoke about the destruction of the temple to His Jewish disciples and other followers, it clearly meant the destruction of the entire world.
31. Does the expression *abomination of desolation* or *awful horror* used by Daniel in Daniel 9:27 and 12:11, apply only to the destruction of Jerusalem? Certainly not. Jesus was also warning those of us who are living during the time of the end.

The Jews had forged their own fetters; they had filled for themselves the cup of vengeance. In the utter destruction that befell them as a nation, and in all the

woes that followed them in their dispersion, they were but reaping the harvest which their own hands had sown. Says the prophet: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;" "for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Hosea 13:9; 14:1. **Their sufferings are often represented as a punishment visited upon them by the direct decree of God. It is thus that the great deceiver seeks to conceal his own work. By stubborn rejection of divine love and mercy, the Jews had caused the protection of God to be withdrawn from them, and Satan was permitted to rule them according to his will. The horrible cruelties enacted in the [36] destruction of Jerusalem are a demonstration of Satan's vindictive power over those who yield to his control.**—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 35.3-36.0.

In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. **Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.**—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 614.1; *LDE** 239.3; *Mar** 265.3; 275.3; *OFC** 333.1.

A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. **The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.**—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 614.2. [Bold type is added.]

32. The things that happened to the Jews crammed into the city of Jerusalem when it was suddenly surrounded by the Roman army under Titus is almost too terrible to describe. Those who tried to escape were crucified; the crosses were so common just outside the city wall that one could hardly walk between them.
33. Surely, none of us still believes that we have not been adequately warned. Are we getting prepared? Are we finding time in our busy schedules for Bible study and prayer? Are we prepared to witness to those with whom we work or associate on a daily basis about what God has done for us?
34. Why do you think Jesus used parables that clearly described events in His day to help us to get ready? Couldn't He have just told us plainly? Jesus used parables to encourage us to think about the issues. He wanted us to place ourselves in those stories. Have we done so? Will we be among the faithful and wise people who are part of God's chosen ones?

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