

End of All Things is at Hand: Four Instructions (part 1)

I. INTRODUCTION - END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. 8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” 9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:7-11)

- A. ***The end of all things:*** The Greek word is **τέλος** (*telos*), which can mean: the end or conclusion of something, its goal or fulfillment, its culmination. Here, Peter is referring to the *culmination of God's redemptive plan*—the return of Christ, the final judgment, and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.
- B. ***Is at Hand:*** The phrase "is at hand" (Greek: *ēngiken*) means has drawn near or is near.
- C. Four instructions in light of the end of the age:
 - 1. ***Be serious and watchful (vs 7):*** We are to be serious, sober minded, and watchful in our prayers. Not giving ourselves over to the “cares of this life” that choke out the seed sown (*Mt 13*). As the world’s mantra is “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die” the heart posture of the believer should be one of watching and waiting.
 - 2. ***Have fervent love for on another (vs 8):*** The premier example in having fervent love for one another is the covering of sins. Not just some or a few sins but rather a multitude.
 - 3. ***Be hospitable (vs 9):*** The Greek word is *philoxenia*, literally meaning "love of strangers." In the ancient world, travelers often had few safe places to stay. Inns could be expensive, dangerous, or immoral. Christians regularly opened their homes to fellow believers traveling for ministry, Christians fleeing persecution, and the poor and needy. Hospitality was therefore a vital expression of Christian love.
 - 4. ***As each on has received a gift, minister it to one another (vs 10):*** The phrase "received a gift" refers to a spiritual gift (Greek: *charisma*), a gracious endowment given by God to each believer for the benefit of others—not primarily for personal status or fulfillment. Peter does not specify particular gifts here because his emphasis is on using whatever God has given you faithfully. This stewardship of the gifts given is the means by which the “*manifold grace of God*” is displayed through the Church.

II. BE SERIOUS AND WATCHFUL: THE PARABLE OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

- A. The oil of intimacy is the fuel to maintain a watchful heart posture. The parable of the ten virgins (25:1-13) emphasizes the need to cultivate intimacy with Jesus as our Bridegroom God and to grow in the First Commandment as we diligently serve God (24:46). Faithful service can only be sustained by cultivating a heart connect with Jesus as our Bridegroom. Some faithful leaders who serve with good motives work inadvertently with a wrong spirit in neglecting to maintain their intimacy with God.

1“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.” (Mt. 25:1-2)

- B. Five wise virgins acquired oil as their ministry lamps shone brightly. The oil speaks of the presence of the Spirit touching our heart as we spend time with God (2 Cor 1:21; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). To “acquire oil” is to connect with God’s heart. The oil of the Spirit touches us in different ways: It tenderizes our heart, enabling us to feel more of God’s desire for us. It enlarges our desire for Him by seeing desire for us. It illuminates our understanding by receiving greater insight into Jesus’ beauty. It imparts zeal for righteousness in us, which helps us to resist and overcome sin.

2Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, 4but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (Mt. 25:2-4)

1. ***Five were foolish:*** They took their lamps (ministry) but took no oil. They pursued ministry as their first priority, instead of acquiring the “oil of intimacy” in their walk with Jesus. Here, Jesus defined foolishness as seeking to serve faithfully without the “oil of intimacy.”
 2. ***Five were wise:*** The wise ministries took oil in their vessels with their lamps. They pursued acquiring oil as their first priority before seeking to expand their ministry. Their relationship with Jesus is their most important priority, or “dream,” instead of their ministry assignment.
- C. It is presumptuous to think we can sustain diligent service without growing in the oil of intimacy. This takes time. I compare it to the need to take time to put fuel in our car instead of pushing it.
- D. At the midnight hour of history, forerunners will cry out with a twofold message to the nations.

5While the Bridegroom delayed, they all slept. 6At midnight a cry was heard: “Behold, the Bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him.” 7Then all...arose and trimmed their lamps. (Mt. 25:5-7)

- E. The foolish ministries recognized their mistake in neglecting to acquire oil.

8The foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” 9The wise answered, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” (Mt. 25:8-9)

- F. Jesus concludes the parable with the instruction to watch. Jesus exhorted us to watch or to recognize the signs of the times (24:42) and to develop intimacy with Him.

10“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. 11Afterward the other virgins [foolish] came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ 12He answered, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ 13Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (Mt. 25:10-13)

III. WATCH FOR THE MASTERS RETURN: THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS: (MT. 25:14-30)

- A. The parable of the talents (25:14-30) alerts us to the fact that faithful service is sustained by knowing that the Lord is watching us and that there are consequences to our actions (rewards or loss of them). Faithful service is defined as not quitting but persevering with diligence in small and hard tasks even when some of God’s promises are delayed (25:21, 24).

- B. The Lord holds each of His people accountable to diligently use the talents that He gave them. According to one’s own ability, God gives each of us a specific assignment for our life based on the capacities that He gave us physically, mentally, emotionally, financially, etc.

14“For the kingdom...is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. 15And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability...16He who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. 17And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. 18But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money.” (Mt. 25:14-17)

- C. The Lord sees and rewards His people for the “few things” in which they are faithful (25:21).

19“After a long time the lord...settled accounts with them. 20So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord...I have gained five more talents...’ 21His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” (Mt. 25:19-21)

- D. Those responding wrongly worked with the wrong evaluation of God and of their work; thus they drew back from serving with diligence.

24“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...25I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground...’ 26But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant...28Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 29For to everyone who has, more will be given... but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.’” (Mt. 25:29)

1. **I knew you to be a hard man:** He was saying that God requires too much and offers too little help and too little reward for our struggles and efforts. That the Lord is too demanding in what He requires from us, that He does not understand the difficulty of our life.
2. **Reaping and gathering:** The accusation is that God asks too much from us without helping us, and that He asks for more than He gives back or requires more than is reasonable. The accusation is that the Lord takes more from His servants than He invests in them.
3. **You wicked and lazy servant:** Jesus revealed part of his problem was laziness.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. In light of the end of all things, Peter’s instructions echo that of the commands of Jesus. We are to be serious and watchful. We are to live in light of the return of the Bridegroom with the oil of intimacy in our lamps.
- B. In light of the bridegroom’s return we are to be serious in our cultivation of the “*talents*” deposited. We are to be confident that the master is eager to reward our labors with His generosity and mercy filled evaluation of our lives. We must grow in the revelation that He does not ask too much of us. He is not a harsh task master. To be faithful in a long life of stewardship we must avoid the accusation that He is too harsh. When we embrace this accusation ultimately it will lead to laziness as we lack the proper motivation to be faithful.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet 5:8)

33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. (Mk 13:33)

13 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. (1 Cor 16:13)