

BUY OIL (PT. 1) | Jesus' Call to Endure and Stay Watchful (Matthew 24)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Setting/Backdrop

- It's the week of Jesus' crucifixion.
- On Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey with cheering crowds.
- On Monday, Jesus drove out the money changers from the temple.
- It is likely Tuesday. Jesus spent the day in Jerusalem teaching the people in parables. He also boldly condemns the religious scribes and teachers for their hypocrisy and spiritual blindness.
- In Matthew 23:37-38, Jesus grieves over Jerusalem (incredible glimpse into his heart).
- As Jesus is leaving the temple, his disciples comment on the magnificence of the temple.
- Jesus responds by prophesying its complete destruction.
- Shortly afterwards, Jesus and his disciples are on the Mount of Olives
- **Jesus' disciples ask him what will things be like at the end of the age and prior to his return.**
- Matthew 24 and 25 are Jesus' answer to his disciples question.
- In these chapters, **Jesus foretells external events, pressures, and crises, and exhorts his followers to cultivate internal attitudes and heart conditions.**

B. Jesus did not teach about the end times so that we would walk in fear.

He's inviting us to trust him, stay connected, and draw everything we need from him.

- We were never meant to understand scripture apart from Jesus, especially the end times.
- Its purpose is to point us to Jesus and to draw out of him everything we need, day by day.
- "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But **the Scriptures point to me!** Yet you refuse to **come to me** to receive this life" (John 5:39-40).
- "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing" [this includes understanding the Bible] (John 15:5).
- We are never to imagine the future without being yoked to Jesus.
- "Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29).
- "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18).
- "...the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave you with; my peace I give to you...do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid" (John 14:26-27).
- "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet **to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:11-13).
- Receiving Jesus is both initial and ongoing. Every time we welcome Jesus into our hearts and minds, he gives supernatural power to draw upon his love and grace in that moment (free refills). This empowers us to respond to pressure, fear, temptation, etc. ("check engine" lights) as deeply loved sons or daughters.

C. Quotes from Corrie Ten Boom

- “Father sat down on the edge of the narrow bed. “Corrie,” he began gently, “when you and I go to Amsterdam—when do I give you your ticket?” I sniffed a few times, considering this. “Why, just before we get on the train.” “Exactly. And our wise Father in heaven knows when we’re going to need things, too. **Don’t run out ahead of Him, Corrie. When the time comes that some of us will have to die, you will look into your heart and find the strength you need—just in time.**”
(*The Hiding Place*)
- “When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don’t throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer.”

II. EVENTS LEADING UP TO JESUS’ RETURN & THE END OF THIS AGE

A. Early Birth Pains (Mt. 24:3-8)

- Deception and false messiahs
- Wars and rumors of wars
- Ethnic tension and conflict (“nation” translates as “ethnos” or “ethnic group”)
- Famines and earthquakes
- In verse 7, “Pestilences” is included in the Hebrew and Aramaic (see Mt. 24:7 in KJV, NKJV; see also Luke 21:11). This word means “plagues.” *The Passion Translation* uses the phrase, “horrible epidemics.”

B. Persecution, Increase of Sin, and the Spread of the Gospel (Mt. 24:9-14)

- Persecution and martyrdom of Christians
- Many people turning away from their faith
- Betrayal and hatred of Christians
- False prophets and widespread deception
- Great increase of sin (multiplication, maturation, or “filling to the max”)
- “Cold love”
- Preaching of the gospel to all nations (“ethnos” = ethnic or people groups)
 - There are approximately 17,446 unique people groups in the world (7.75 billion people).
 - Approximately 10,046 people groups have been reached with the gospel (60% or 4.5 billion).
 - 7,400 are unreached (roughly 40% or 3 billion).

C. Fulfillment of Daniel’s Prophecy (Mt. 24:15-22)

- Daniel prophesied that a ruler will set up an “abomination” in the temple that “causes desolation” (see Dan. 8:13, 9:27, 11:31, and 12:11).
- “Abomination” = vile, shameful, detestable, evil. “Desolation” = devastation, barren, empty.
- Jesus prophesied that when this occurs it will be a sign that his return is near.
- This was initially fulfilled in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans (approximately one million people were killed).
- After the siege, historians believed the Roman leader, Titus, went into the temple and sacrificed animals to pagan gods.
- The temple was completely destroyed by the Romans fulfilling Jesus’ prophecy in Matthew 24:37.
- Daniel’s prophecy also points to the Antichrist who will exalt himself in the temple, proclaim himself as God, and be worshiped by all the nations (see 2 Thess. 2:3-4, Rev. 13:1-8, 15).

III. THE GLORY OF JESUS' APPEARING (Mt. 24:26-31)

A. Christ's Return will not be Hidden but Evident and Visible to Everyone (Mt. 24:26-28)

- Don't get caught up in speculations, conspiracy theories, or "special revelation" about Jesus' return.
- Jesus' return will be unmistakable and clearly evident to everyone on the planet.
- You won't have to worry about missing it.
- Just as lightning lights up the sky and you can see it from far away, you won't miss Jesus' return.
- Just as vultures circling high in the air give away the location of a carcass, Jesus' return will be publicly known.

B. The Sun and Moon will not Shine and Stars will Fall (Mt. 24:29)

- Jesus prophesied that just prior to his return, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shine, and stars will fall from the sky.
- This was foretold by ancient prophets (see Isaiah 13:10, Isaiah 34:4, Ezekiel 32:7, and Joel 2:10, 2:31)
- It was also foretold in Revelation 6:12-14 and Revelation 8:12

C. Christ will Come on the Clouds of Heaven with Power and Glory. (Mt. 24:30-31)

- As unbelievable as it sounds, Jesus will somehow travel on or in clouds. Just as he ascended to heaven with clouds, so he will return.
- It will be part of a great procession in which Jesus comes as Bridegroom, King, and Judge. He will remove everything that opposes love, humility, and justice.
- Jesus' coming on clouds was seen by Daniel and is mentioned in Revelation (Dan. 7:13, Rev. 1:7).
- Jesus himself quoted his appearing on clouds to the high priest during his trial (Mk. 14:62).
- The appearing of Jesus will be indescribably great and glorious. He will come in all the Father's glory with angels (Mt. 16:27).
- It is called the "Great and terrible day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31, Malachi 4:5).
- For those longing for him, it will be the fulfillment of our heart's deepest desire. For those that hate him, it will be utterly terrifying.
- "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is **revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels**. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from **the glory of his might** on the day **he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed**. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." (2 Thess. 1:6-10)
- Jesus' appearing is called "the blessed hope." It deeply inspired, encouraged, and strengthened the early Church. Through God's grace, it empowered them to live righteously.
- "For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation...it teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while **we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ...**" (Titus 2:11-14).
- "Blessed" = supremely fortunate, bringing great happiness and indescribable joy
- "Hope" = joyful and confident expectation; a feeling that what is desired can and will come to pass and that events will turn out for the best.
- I am asking the Holy Spirit to put Jesus' return on the radar of my heart. I want to think about it often. I want my heart to beat a little faster with expectation and longing. I want it to be an internal compass that impacts what I dream about, hope for, and how I live my daily life.

D. **Despite the Signs of Jesus' Return, Only the Father Knows When it will Occur**

- “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Mt. 24:36).

IV. HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

A. **Cultivate Endurance**

- Jesus promised that the one who “**stands firm**” in the midst of the pressures of the end times will be saved, rescued, and delivered.
- “... the one who **stands firm** to the end will be saved” (Mt. 24:12-13).
- What does it mean to “stand firm?”
- Simply stated, it means to endure, persevere, or to bear up under difficulty.
- It literally means to “remain under the load.”
- This kind of endurance is an expression of God’s love being formed in and through us.
- “Love [God’s love] endures long and is patient ... Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]” (1 Cor. 13:1-7 AMPC)
- “Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away” (Song of Solomon 8:7)
- In other words, when Jesus calls us to “stand firm,” it is an invitation to have that particular attribute of his character formed within us over time.
- Jesus is the source of enduring love. It comes from him. We are not called to grit our teeth and produce endurance through our own will or determination.
- Rather, Jesus’ endurance is formed within us as regularly draw near to him, asking and him for it, and thanking him, and receiving it by simple child-like faith.
- Endurance is formed within us as we “behold” the beauty of his endurance.
- “And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him [through repeated contemplation and “beholding”] who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
- “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding [contemplating] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...” (2 Cor. 3:18 NKJV)
- During earth’s greatest pressures, Jesus will have a people who have learned how to practically abide in Him and draw from him everything they need. They will be fiery and fervent in the midst of great darkness.

B. **Cultivate “Watchfulness”**

- “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him” (Mt. 24:42-44).
- Watchfulness is having a ready and anticipatory posture within our hearts.
- It involves both external watching and internal watching.
- We should be aware of the external signs of the times and we should be cultivating an inner “gazing” of our hearts upon Jesus.