

⁶ “And at midnight a cry was heard: *‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’* (Mt. 25:6)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Due to the unique hour in which we are living there is a *necessary* and *appropriate* response believers must embrace in order to walk in victory unto mature love, avoid deception, and enter into the power and privilege of what the Lord will release on His end-time church.

⁶ If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it? ⁷ Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret (plan) to His servants the prophets. ⁸ A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy (witness to His plan)? (Amos 3:6-8)

B. Whenever God moves in a generation, there is a release of *new privilege* and *experiential knowledge* that He grants to His people. There are 3 key generations in which this shift is plainly evident throughout scripture.

1. The generation of Moses – the Hebrew people were bound in slavery for 400 years and in **one generation** the Lord raises up a deliver (Moses) who through powerful signs and wonders transitions the people into the privilege and power of the Aaronic priesthood. This covenant, and new access to God was confirmed with mighty signs and the visible/audible glory of God on the mountain.

2. The generation of John the Baptist and Jesus – God raised up John who was anointed with powerful preaching to prepare the way for Christ (Is. 40:3). Through the ministry of John and Jesus the people of Israel were beckoned into the glory of the new covenant. Through this covenant, new power and privilege was given to the people of God (see Acts 1:5, 8, 2:33, 10:45; Rom. 5:5). In one generation the way in which God’s people related to Him was dramatically different. Powerful preaching, signs and wonders, and divine judgment marked this generation.

3. The end-time generation – before the coming of the Lord, He will release His spirit in an *unusual, historic* way across the people of God throughout the nations. What began in Acts chapter 2 in an upper room will again happen in a “*global upper room*” as the Holy Spirit is poured out in a fresh and powerful way. *Every believer* will walk in the spirit of prophecy; there will be unusual signs and wonders, the great harvest of souls (some estimate 1 billion), the ministry of the two witnesses, the terrible reign of the antichrist, and the glorious return of the God-man- Christ the Lord.

C. What we are focusing on is the *necessary* and *appropriate* response the faithful had during their day of visitation, and what the Lord is inviting us into *now* before the glory and trouble begin to mount.

II. CHRIST'S COMING – A SNAPSHOT OF THE PRESSURE THAT PRECEDES

- A. Matthew 24 is Jesus' central teaching on the events of the end-time generation (see also Lk. 21/Mk. 13). There He outlines the coming pressure to the earth (vs. 4-12), the rise of the Antichrist and subsequent tribulation (vs. 15-28), His unmistakable return (vs. 29-31), and two timing-indicator parables (vs. 32-51).
- B. This end-time generation will be unlike any preceding it. Jesus warned that there would be a *flood of deception* (24:4) that would lead to a great *falling away* from the faith (24:10-12; 2 Thess. 2:2). The rise and ministry of the Antichrist will lead to great destruction (desolation) in the earth.
- ²¹For then (after the revealing of the AC) there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. ²²Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short (to 3.5 years). (Mt. 24:21, 22)*
- 14...These (the end time harvest) are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:14)*
- C. In the book of Revelation John sees the beginning of the coming trouble. He sees the kings of the earth in panic and fear. Their question is, “Who can endure this day?”
- Then the kings of the earth...hid themselves in the vases and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17)*
- D. The prophet Joel asked the same question when he saw the distress of the Day of the Lord. He saw the greatness of that day related to the outpouring of the Spirit and the terrible rise of trouble and pressure.
- ...For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)*
- E. During this hour, Israel and the body of Christ will face the rage of Satan who knows his time is short. Persecution will rise, tribulation will rise, and martyrdom will be widespread.
- ¹⁷And the dragon (Satan) was enraged (lit. fixated anger) with the woman (Israel), and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring (the church), who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:17)*
- ⁷It was also given to him (AC) to make war with the saints and to overcome (kill/destroy) them, and authority over every tribe tongue and people and nation were given to him. (Rev. 13:7)*
- F. As the day of the Lord draws near this question will be asked by the nations. But there are two very different motivations as to **why** it will be asked. The unbelievers will be looking to **endure** for the sake of their self-preservation. But the word endure means something entirely different to the believer. To the believer, endurance is the resolve to remain faithful in the face of trial not escape from the trial.

- G. The aim of the believer is to be faithful to God in life *or* death. Paul said that whether he lived or died it was all to the glory of God.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:21)

And they (the saints) overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:11)

III. OUR REPOSE TO COMING TROUBLE

- A. Jesus' exhortation about the end of the age in Matthew 24 is replete with information that indicates how believers are to respond.

⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. (Mt. 24:6)

²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. (Mt. 24:20)

³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! (Mt. 24:33)

⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. (Mt. 24:42)

⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Mt. 24:44)

- B. The precedence that the Lord lays out is that in light of coming tribulation we give ourselves to understanding, the place of prayer, and devotion to the Word.

- C. The prophet Daniel told us that there would be those of understanding in the midst of the dark hour who give understanding, turning many to righteousness.

³¹ And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation. ³² Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits. ³³ And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall (be killed) by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. (Dan. 11:31-33)

³ Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. (Dan. 12:3)

- D. His exhortation doesn't stop at the end of chapter 24 but continues on into Matthew 25 where He gives insight of the tools necessary to *endure* the coming pressure.

IV. MINISTRY TO GOD – THE LAMP

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

- A. In this parable there are ten virgins who symbolize 10 believers. They all took their lamps with them. The lamp in this parable speaks of the *inner ministry to God*. It is implied that each of the virgins was initially committed an empty lamp.
- B. The lamp shows us that every believer has been committed a ministry that will either be filled with oil, or remain empty. This ministry is not speaking of the outward ministry to others, because not every Christian is called to lead a ministry seen by others. This ministry spoken of is the inner ministry of the heart. It's our devotional life in God, unseen by others.
- ⁴ rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Pt. 3:4)***
- ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:3)***
1. Some believers have a ministry that is before the eyes of men. This is what we think of when we think of churches, ministries, outreaches etc.
 2. However, their most important ministry is that on the inside, in intimacy with God. No other person can rightly know the depth of relationship another has with the Lord.
- C. Peter said that every believer has been brought into a royal priesthood. The priesthood served primarily as a ministry to God. The priest's role was to stand before God and minister to Him *simply because of who He is*, rather than an attempt to grow an outward ministry.
- ⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Pt. 2:9)***
- “But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,” says the Lord God. (Ez. 44:15)***
- ²¹ And I will also take some of them (Gentile believers) for priests and Levites,” says the LORD.***
- ²² “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “So shall your descendants and your name remain.” (Is. 66:21, 22)***

V. DELAY – REVEALS WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS

- ² Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³ Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴ but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵ But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. (Mt. 25:2-5)***
- A. Five of virgins are wise, and five are foolish. The wise virgins are such before they took oil in the lamps to meet the bridegroom (who is Jesus). This means that in light of the return of the bridegroom they prioritized an inner life in God. (*Many times in scripture oil symbolizes the Spirit – Lk. 4:18; Acts 10:38; Ps. 133:2*). They did what was necessary to be prepared for that day.

- B. The “oil” speaks of the presence of the Spirit touching our heart
1. It tenderizes our heart, enabling us to feel more of God’s desire for us and desire for Him.
 2. It illuminates our understanding with revelation of God’s majesty and beauty.
- C. The other five are foolish; they didn’t fill their lamps with oil. This means that they neglected to cultivate this vibrant inner life. Gaining the oil of an inner life in God is free, but it also costly. The demands of life and ministry press down upon the believer and it takes real courage and resolve to say, “No,” to opportunities and people in order to develop the oil of intimacy.
- D. In verse 5, the bridegroom is delayed. All the virgins, both wise and foolish, sleep during this interval; meaning, this is not a negative response. We are currently in this delay.
- E. The Lord uses the fire of delay to show what is truly wise and foolish. As believers in the midst of delay of the coming of the Lord we are exhorted to remain “watchful” and become discouraged. Rather than staying engaged with the Holy Spirit carrying a spiritual sobriety the believer can tend to focus on the messages and themes that immediately impact their ministry. Often if a pursuit doesn’t gain immediate fruit, it is pushed down the priority list.

¹³ *“Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour^{bj} in which the Son of Man is coming. (Mt. 25:13)*

- F. Peter warned us to not grow weary in the waiting. There will be an increase of a “scoffing spirit” as the witness of Christ’s return and subsequent necessary lifestyle changes begin to fill the minds of believers.

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),² 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,³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,⁴ 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.” (2 Peter 3:1-4)

- G. There is a day when the internal fruit of the heart will be seen as wise. The rejected pursuit of today, the worldly mind deems as foolish, will be shown as wise before heaven.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.” (Mt. 11:19)

VI. THE 4-FOLD RESPONSE

⁶ *“And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ (Mt. 25:6)*

- A. This midnight cry summarizes the forerunner message in a succinct way. This 4-fold response is primary way that we prepare for the pressures of chapter Mt. 24.

1. ***Behold*** God – fix your mind upon Him. See Him as preeminent and worthy.
2. He is a ***bridegroom*** – to grow in intimacy and understand His judgments, we must know His heart as a zealous bridegroom who is deeply committed to His people.
3. He is ***coming*** – scripture shouts the return of Christ to the earth.
4. ***Go out to meet Him*** – count the cost to do what is necessary to cultivate the oil of intimacy with the Lord. Engage in the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. Read the word with a devotional spirit. Say no to other things to prioritize a life in God.