

ESSENTIAL OIL



“Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.”

Matthew 25:1-4

BEING PREPARED FOR THE RETURN OF JESUS

The Return of Jesus

It is a certainty that Jesus will return. There are several passages that confirm this. In Acts 1:11, Jesus gathers His disciples together at Mount Olivet after His resurrection to give them some final instructions. When He finished, He was lifted up into heaven to the clouds and then out of their sight. Then, two angels appeared and said that Jesus would return in the same way that they watched Him go into heaven.

Hebrews 9:28 states that the first time that Jesus was here, He bore the sins of the world, providing a way of salvation. And that when He appears a second time, it will be for the salvation of those who received Him and eagerly await Him. In John 14:1-3 Jesus says that He is going to prepare a place for those who believe in Him. And that if He is going to do that, He will come again so that we can be with Him in the place that He has prepared for us. There are other verses throughout the New Testament as well that speak of Jesus returning.

In addition to assuring us that He **will** return, He also describes for us what His return will be like. The days leading up to that event are described as being very deceptive. He tells us ahead of time, in certain terms, what to expect because it will be a time unlike any other since the beginning of the world. It's very important that we understand the characteristics of His return so that we won't be misled.

In Matthew 24:27, Jesus tells us that His return will be as the lightning flashing from the east to the west, very attention-getting. Revelation 1:7 tells us that He is coming with the clouds and that **every eye** will see Him. Jesus made a specific point in Matthew 24 to mention this characteristic of His return because many will be deceived into thinking He has returned when He hasn't. If there's one thing to remember, it's that if **you personally** did not see Him return, it didn't happen.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 tells us that another characteristic of His return is that He is coming like a thief in the night, and Jesus echoes this same idea in Revelation 16:15. In Matthew 24 He describes the time of His return as in the days of Noah, emphasizing that many will be taken completely by surprise. They will be carrying on with life, business as usual, until it's too late.

In addition to those characteristics, we need to have a general familiarity with the events prophesied to take place in the days leading up to His return so that we can discern the times. In a nutshell, those days are going to become increasingly deceptive and evil and will lead to the dictatorship of the man of sin. He will claim to be God and will mandate that he be worshipped as such. Those who won't comply are to be killed.

Believers are instructed to be ready and alert, to keep the faith and persevere until He returns. If we are ready for those days, the Holy Spirit will give us the discernment we need to see through the lies and the perseverance we need to endure to the end.

Being Ready

Jesus uses the analogy of a thief in the night and the comparison to the days of Noah to exhort believers to stay awake and be on the alert. Numerous times this point is reiterated so it's reasonable to assume that there will be a prevailing tendency to lapse into a state of unpreparedness.

Three times in Mark 13 Jesus exhorts believers to be on the alert for His return. In Revelation 16:15, He says that those who stay awake and persevere in the truth until His return are blessed. In Luke 21:34, He tells us to be on guard so that we don't get wrapped up in the cares of this life and waste time by engaging in a worldly lifestyle.

In Matthew 25, Jesus gives us distinct characteristics of those who will be ready for His return, and those who won't. He does so in a parable about ten virgins who are waiting for the arrival of the bridegroom so they can join him at the wedding feast. Five of the virgins were prepared when he showed up and went into the feast with him. Five were not prepared and consequently, did not attend.

In the parable, Jesus refers to those who were ready as wise, and the ill-prepared virgins He calls foolish. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus explains what He means when He refers to someone as being either wise or foolish. He says that a wise person will act on His teachings but a foolish one will ignore them.

Of the foolish virgins, the bridegroom stated that he did not know them. The inference is that he knew the wise ones, the ones that were ready. In John 14:21, Jesus explains that the way that we get to know Him is by keeping His commandments. This goes hand-in-hand with acting on His teachings. Simply put, those who will be ready for His return are those who act on His teachings and keep His commandments.

The New Covenant

A large part of Jesus' teaching ministry had to do with the new covenant that He was bringing. His sinless life and death on the cross provided the perfect sacrifice for sin. Anyone who would forsake their lifestyle of sin and follow Him would be forgiven and have eternal life. They would no longer be a part of the kingdom of darkness but would belong to the kingdom of God. God would put His Spirit within them to guide them and help them in their new-found identity. They would no longer be a slave to sin but they would be freed from that bondage to serve their new King.

This transition out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God would bring a change in perspective. The writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John contain the teachings of Jesus and explain what we are to value and how we are to live as servants in the kingdom of God. If you've never read those books, or if it's been a long time since you have, doing so would be time well spent. In order to act on the teachings of Jesus, you first have to know what they are.

Among the things that Jesus taught was the exceeding value of eternal things over the temporary things of this world which are going to pass away. He tells us to store up treasures in heaven rather than to pursue earthly treasures which can be stolen or destroyed. He says that the reward for good works having been done in His name will never be lost.

He also taught that nothing in this world is more valuable than the gift of eternal life. If a person were able to acquire all this world's wealth, it would be of no benefit to them when they lose their soul. No one can serve two masters. Everyone must choose whether they are going to seek worldly gain for themselves, or if they are going to pursue the will of God.

Since we were born with a sinful nature, knowing and doing the will of God does not come naturally to us. This is why He gives every believer the Holy Spirit, to guide us in understand and doing those things that servants in the kingdom of God should.

Then the End Will Come

Jesus charged His disciples with taking the gospel of the kingdom to all the nations. This would fulfill the promise He made to Abraham that in him all the nations, or Gentiles, would be blessed. Jesus said in Matthew 24 that after this promise is fulfilled, then the end would come. There are indications that the gospel has indeed already been preached to all the nations and that we are in the end times. The most compelling of which is what Jesus said about the time of the Gentiles in Luke 21:24. He said that Jerusalem would be trampled underfoot until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. This began in 70 AD and continued as the gospel was being spread around the world. Today, Jerusalem is no longer being trampled by Gentiles, so the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled. The gospel has been preached to the nations and now we are seeing activities that will culminate in the return of Christ.

The creation of the state of Israel, the presence of a global governing body, an interconnected global economy, the propagation of lies and deception leading to immorality, and other prophetically significant trends leave little doubt that the stage is being set for the man of sin to be revealed. This will ultimately lead to the return of Jesus and the establishment of the physical kingdom of God on earth.

How to Prepare

As the age of Satan's earthly dominion is being brought to its end, we would do well to heed the warnings of Jesus to remain ready and alert. From the parable of the ten virgins, we know that this means that we are to act on Jesus' teaching, to keep His commandments. This lifestyle of obedience is what will give us the extra oil that is essential if we are to be ready. So, the first step in being prepared is to **know** His teachings. Only then can they be acted upon.

As was mentioned earlier, those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that God gives to every believer. The teachings of Jesus explain how believers should live out their lives here on earth as servants in His kingdom and the Holy Spirit will help us in that life-long endeavor.

The struggle that every believer faces is their natural tendency to be drawn toward the things of the kingdom of darkness, to the things of this world. It's a relentless tendency that must be met with resistance. There are spiritual disciplines that believers can engage in that will help in the ability to resist temptation; prayer, reading God's word, giving, and fasting to name a few.

The writer of Hebrews knew that evil would escalate in the days before Christ's return. This is why he exhorts us to stir up one another to love and good works, **especially** as we see the day drawing near. So, I would encourage you to safeguard your most precious possession, your soul. It's more valuable than anything this world has to offer.

Summary

It's a certainty that Jesus will return and that everyone will see it for themselves when He does. Those who will be ready for His return are those who put into practice what He taught, those who both know **and** do the will of God. They will be able to discern between good and evil as the times get more deceptive, and they will have the perseverance to endure until His return.

The time of the Gentiles has been fulfilled and we are into the time of the end. The gospel has been preached worldwide and believers are maturing into the unity of the faith. Conditions around the world are trending toward what has been foretold for centuries. Remain vigilant and persevere until His return.