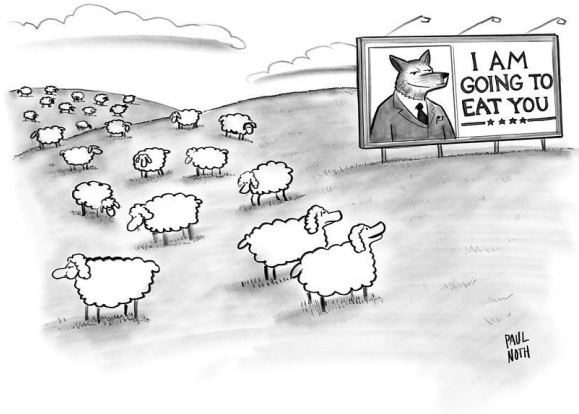


Making the Most of Wednesday, September 9

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" — Matt. 7:15



"He tells it like it is."

Between 6:00—9:00 AM: Good morning, Valley Church Brother or Sister! Unfortunately, unlike the wolf in the cartoon, bogus spiritual leaders never announce their true intentions or the long-term effects of their teaching. One sign of the return of King Jesus is the presence of fleece-dressed predators. They'll appear compassionate and sophisticated, but the outcome of their teaching is destruction for those who follow it. What's more, there are other indicators in Scripture that very taxing times will precede the coming of the Lord Jesus to make us alive, healthy and happy forever in his presence. Here's a preview of coming detractions from the peace and prosperity that we erroneously assume will always be ours. This passage is from Matt. 24:3-8, the famous Olivet Discourse.

3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

4 And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

8 All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

What are the signs that Jesus gives us to look out for? I count five, but you might count differently. Worship the One who controls the timing of all events related to the completion of the Kingdom.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death," — Matt. 24:9.



Between 9:00 AM—12:00 PM: As you can see, the long squeeze continues for Every Pilgrim. In this scene, her affliction is physical and outward. This is the case now for many Christians in the world, and mistreatment of believers will increase as the age reaches its cataclysmic climax. This is Matt. 24:9-14.

9 *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.*

10 *And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.*

11 *And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.*

12 *And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.*

13 *But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

14 *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

Ask the Lord to sustain believers in countries that are experiencing significant pain in the present time. If you have time, visit opendoors.org, click on "United States" and then click on "World Watch List."

BETWEEN 12:00—3:00 PM: We're going to read more difficult Scripture in this three-hour block of time. The Olivet Discourse is difficult for two reasons. First, it's difficult to imagine enduring the experiences that Jesus describes. Second, it's difficult to interpret the text, and good scholars disagree. Some say that these events have already taken place — or at least some of them. Others say they depict future events. Some say that we believers won't be around to experience them, and others say that we will be. There's more to sort out than we can in one Prayer Guide. However, one Joel Moment participant you'll meet today will warn us to be prepared. Let's familiarize ourselves with Matt. 24:15-31.

15 *"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),*

16 *then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*

17 *Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,*

18 *and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.*

19 *And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!*

20 *Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.*

21 *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.*

22 *And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.*

23 *Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.*

24 *For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.*

25 *See, I have told you beforehand.*

26 *So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.*

27 *For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

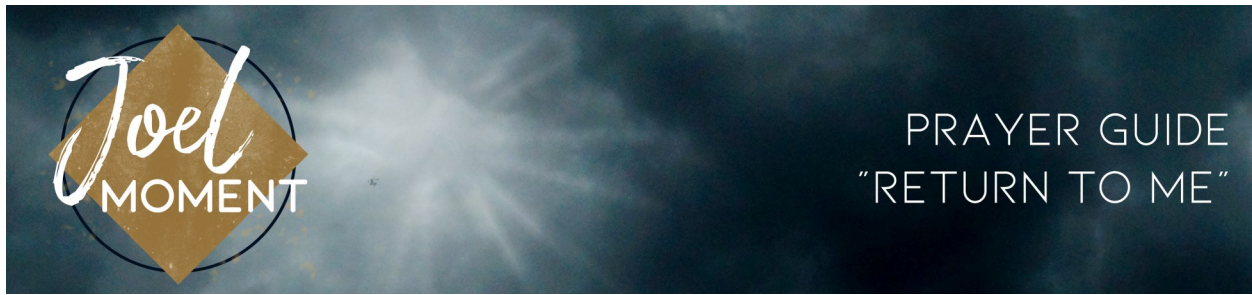
28 *Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.*

29 *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

30 *Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

31 *And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*

Are you lacking words? Here's language adapted from "A Prayer of Protection," published in *Prayers from the Heart* by Richard Foster, p. XIII. We can adopt the prayers of others and make them our own. Try this one: *"Loving Lord, as we continue this journey through the long squeeze, please be with us —guarding and guiding. Protect us, O God, from all evil. Surround us with the light of Christ; cover us with the blood of Christ; seal us with the cross of Christ. This we ask in the name of Christ. Amen."*



BETWEEN 3:00—4:00 PM: Join the **Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.com) and enter Meeting ID and Password.

BETWEEN 5:00-9:00 PM: Let's finish the chapter as a reminder to be persevering and alert.

^{ESV} **Matthew 24:32-51** *"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁶ "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. ³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. ⁴⁵ "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁷ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know ⁵¹ and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

We don't have to understand future events in minute detail as a prelude to worship. We can and must worship the God of History with imperfect understanding, while also seeking to comprehend more of our Father's plan and timetable for the future. After receiving a vision from God, the Prophet Daniel had to call in sick from work! (Dan. 8:27). Hopefully, after exploring Matthew 24 today, you won't have to take to your bed. In truth, we have better understanding than even Daniel had because we have the New Testament and know God's Anointed Son and King *personally*; he lives in our hearts by his Spirit now. Later we'll share a habitat with him when all the dust settles. Maybe we should close the day by singing a simple song of trust, **"Jesus Loves Me."**

Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so
Little ones to Him belong
They are weak, but He is strong

Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
The Bible tells me so

Jesus loves me, He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide
He will wash away my sin
Let His little child come in

Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
The Bible tells me so

Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
The Bible tells me so
The Bible tells me so



MARION WINDSOR [A life sketch and how God sustained her through a storm that finally passed by.]

FRED STONEHOUSE [His brief biography and the heavy burden he carries regarding Matthew 24.]

ANDY DRAKE [A prayer called “Hope in God” that fits this year of disease, disorder, hatred and infernos.]

How, O LORD, can I have hope when this world is such an insecure place?

Natural calamities destroy.

Economic uncertainties abound.

Human beings kill.

I AM the light of the world.

What, O God, is reliable? What is secure?

Not people.

Not institutions.

Not governments.

I AM the way, the truth, and the life.

I fear, Lord, that evil will win out in the end.

I worry that my efforts will be for nothing.

I feel overwhelmed by powers beyond my control.

I AM the resurrection and the life.

You alone, O Lord, are my hope. You alone are my safety.

You alone are my strength. May I — even with my fears and anxieties, my insecurities and uncertainties—swing like a needle to the pole star of the Spirit.

Amen.



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #1 (7 min.): COVID 19, civil chaos and now combustion of our forests (*“Thus says the LORD GOD, behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree. The blazing flame shall not be quenched...All flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it; it shall not be quenched”* (Ez. 20:47). Pray that 41 million Californians would repent of arrogance, greed, immorality, idolatry and self-sufficiency.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #2 (7 min.): Ask that we believers will be prepared for the intensified squeezing that Jesus talks about in Matthew 24, if we should have to live through it. Also ask God to make us like the *“faithful and wise servant”* who faithfully carries out his Master’s business at home, at work and in secret places (Mt. 24:45).

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #3 (7 min.): Practical needs abound in our schools, homes and community. Lift up hurting people and thorny problems.

GROUP PRAYER PROMPT #4 (7 min.): Finish your small group prayer by telling God (and those in your group) what you love and appreciate about your Heavenly Father.

Record what God shows you in Joel Moment, Part 2 — that is, the time after 4:00 PM — when we share Scripture, intercede and support each other as the Holy Spirit leads us.
