

Ready For Christ's Coming

Luke 12:35-48

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Luke 12:35-37 says, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them." This is an amazing promise. When Jesus comes back, He will "gird himself" and actually serve us.

Starting with verse 38, "And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

This is the first half of our text, and there are only two divisions to it. The first division is from verses 35-40, which is the exhortation to readiness. This first division is summarized in verse 40: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

The Bible teaches very clearly that Jesus Christ is coming again. I emphasize that because there are a lot of people who don't believe that or don't live like that is true. They have abandoned the doctrine of the Second Advent or the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament has 260 chapters, and Christ's return is mentioned no less than 318 times. One out of every 25 verses in the New Testament makes reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is a very important doctrine. Over and over again Jesus said that He would come back. He said, "As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27). So the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, makes reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

This is an important, essential, fundamental doctrine. I say that, because a lot of people put emphasis—and rightly so—on the Incarnation, which is the virgin birth, the Crucifixion, which is His substitutionary death on the Cross, on His Resurrection, His Ascension and His exaltation in heaven, but they stop there and forget that Jesus Christ is coming back. We still have that future hope when the Lord will return and establish His kingdom on earth.

When Jesus ascended, the angels told the disciples, "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). And how did He go? Visibly, bodily into heaven. So Jesus will come visibly, bodily, gloriously and powerfully to establish His kingdom on earth that will never end. And we are looking forward to that blessed hope.

How does our text fit into the subject of Luke 12? Starting with Luke 12 and going through Luke 13:9 is one, long discourse. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. We have seen that there are three things He warned us of before He speaks about being ready for His return. First, He warned us of hypocrisy (Luke 12:1). He said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Second, He warned us of covetousness (Luke 12:15). He said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." And He gave us the parables of the rich fool and the rich farmer. Third, He warned us of the danger of worry (Luke 12:22). "Do not worry..." or "be anxious" or "be concerned" "... about your life."

I think the interesting thought is that being ready for the Lord's return will take care of hypocrisy, covetousness and worry—and a lot of other sins also. The Bible says, "Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3). We're going to see the slothful, wicked servants who thought the master had delayed His coming. But the servants who were faithful expected the Lord's coming, and they were ready and prepared. So we are to be faithful servants ready for the Lord's return.

Backing up to verse 34, it says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." So if your treasure is in Christ and in heaven and you're looking for His Second Coming, that's where your heart is. That will motivate you to not be hypocritical or fear man, not to be covetous and not to worry. Jesus Christ will come back and right all wrongs and judge righteously.

So our whole passage today deals with the coming of our Lord and the importance of being ready for His coming. It's so very important.

In verses 35-40, we have the exhortation to readiness. At first, we should be waiting, verses 35-36. "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning." What does He mean by that? We don't use the phrase "gird up your loins." In those days, men wore robes and not pants. And it's kind of hard to work in a robe, so they would bunch the robe up and pull it up between their legs and tuck it into their belt. Then they would be ready to go to work. We would use the phrase today, "Roll up your sleeves and go to work." So they were to be ready to go to work and waiting and watching for the Lord's return.

Then He goes through the imagery of lights burning, verse 35. They would have lamps and oil for light, which meant that they were ready for anything. It could be He was saying to be ready to go to work and have your light on to be looking, watchful and ready for the Lord's return.

This next part we can't be sure it's a parable or a metaphor. Basically it paints pictures of the importance of being ready and watchful and working. Jesus is speaking to the multitude, which included the disciples and the Pharisees. "You yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately."

If you try to read into this parable a prophetic or an eschatological meaning, it gets confusing

and frustrating, because it's not intended to be that; it's supposed to be a simple teaching. Jesus is simply describing a life situation where a wealthy master or lord, who has servants or slaves, is away at a wedding. Weddings in those days could last for a whole week. You never knew when it would be done. So his servant didn't know when his master would be coming home. The master might even return at night, or in the morning, tomorrow or next week. Jesus was just painting this true-life picture. So the servant had to be ready for the master's return by having the gate open and having the lights on to welcome him home.

That's all that Jesus is saying here. They didn't know when the master would return, so they had to be ready for him at any time. If you expect someone to show up at night and don't know when they will come, you stay up and be dressed and leave the lights on to receive that person. You might have the door open when they arrive to receive them. So we understand this. So He is painting a picture of these servants who are waiting, looking and watching for their master's return.

And we are to be living in expectation of the Lord's return. Don't lose the expectation and the hope of the coming again of Jesus Christ. It has practical implications.

Notice that these servants are blessed who do this, verse 37. "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them." This is amazing to me. Who is sitting down to eat and who is serving them? There is no other conclusion than it is the master who is serving the servants! He tells the servants they're awesome, he takes off his coat, he girds up his loins and actually serves them!

The implication can be—and I think it's fitting to make—that when we get to heaven and we have been faithful and been looking for the Lord's return, He will reward us by actually serving us. That's amazing! The Lord will tell us, "Sit down. I want to serve you."

Remember in John 13 when Jesus was in the upper room just hours before He would be arrested in the garden and crucified on the Cross? He got up from supper, laid aside His garments and put a towel around His waist, which was the badge of a slave. He then got down on His knees and washed His disciples' feet.

Could it be that's what will happen when we get to heaven? Can you imagine getting to heaven and Jesus washes your feet?! Jesus starts to serve you. He said, "Good and faithful servant....Enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21). He'll have us sit down, and we'll have the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). That is an amazing thought!

And He wraps it up in verse 38. "And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants." We're not sure if He is talking about the Jewish time frame or if it was the Roman watches—there were three of them. If it is the Roman time frame, the second watch would be 9:00 p.m. to midnight, and the third watch would be midnight to 3:00 a.m.

So we don't know when the master is going to come home, so the one, basic lesson is be ready, be born again, be filled with the Spirit, have your lamps burning brightly, have your sleeves rolled up and be serving the Lord. Be looking for the Lord's return.

In verses 39-40, we see the imagery or the metaphor where the parable changes to the master of the house not knowing when the thief would come. So we go from a wedding to a thief who would break into your house and we need to be ready for that. Jesus said, "But know this, that if the master of the house..." who is at home "...had known what hour the thief would come..." we don't know the day or hour the Lord will come "...he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

So in verse 36, we had "wait"; in verse 37 we had "watching"; and in verse 40, we have "ready."

Have you ever had a burglar call you before he breaks into your house? Obviously not. I've been burglarized where I've had things stolen. I thought, Oh, if I could just have been here and caught them! At my former church, we had pots outside with plants in them, and someone kept stealing them. So me and some of the guys hid behind the church one day and waited for the thief. I thought, What are we going to do if the guy shows up? Are we going to beat him up in the name of Jesus?! How does this work? We realized how stupid that was and abandoned it.

I remember years ago I was asleep at night, and because it was a summer night, I had my window open. I had my car parked outside the garage in the driveway, which I wasn't thinking about when I woke up to a popping sound four times. I thought, That's a weird noise. Forget about it, so I went back to sleep. In the morning I saw that all my hubcaps were gone. I thought, Oh, if I'd have just jumped up after the first pop! I could have died and been in the newspaper!

Again, all Jesus is talking about here is about being ready. He just wants us to be ready.

There is a hidden thought to this passage, as well. That is that the Jews believed the Messiah would come to reign, conquer and set up His kingdom. To this day, they are not looking for the Second Coming, because they didn't know about the first coming; that He would come to die. So implied in these words of Jesus is that He is the Son of Man, the Messiah, but He will come again. He was conditioning their minds to realize He would be crucified, risen and then return; that there would be a waiting period likened to a dark night before He would return. So the inference is "Be ready"; we are to be waiting, watching and be ready.

Verse 40 is the conclusion of this first section: "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man..." a Messianic title Jesus used for Himself "...is coming at an hour you do not expect." This verse gives us the certainty of the event, that He is coming, but it gives us the uncertainty of the time. It's certainty is also stated in verse 36: "when he will return" and "when he comes"; and in verse 37: "when he comes"; and in verse 38: "he should come" and "come."

Now I want to give you eight reasons why Jesus must return. Number one, the promise of God

demands it. What God has spoken cannot be broken. God promised a Second Coming, and it will happen.

Number two, the claims of Jesus demand it. Jesus claimed He would come again.

Number three, the testimony of the Holy Spirit demands it. The Holy Spirit was inspiring the promise of the Second Advent in the Scriptures.

Number four, God's program for the church demands it. The church is God's bride. It will be "caught up...to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). So the program God has for the church demands that we come back, in Revelation 19, with Christ in His Second Coming. So the church has to be "caught up" to heaven in the rapture before it can come back with Christ in the Second Coming.

Number five, the future of Israel demands it. God has a plan and purpose to save Israel. Paul says, "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). His plan for Israel will be fulfilled when their Messiah comes back in power and glory. "Every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7), especially the Jewish people.

Number six, the vindication of Christ demands it. To vindicate Christ, the Second Coming is necessary. Christ died, Christ arose, Christ ascended and Christ is exalted. How will it all wrap up? Human history will wrap up. Time as we know it will wrap up. That will all happen at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It will be the culmination of God's redemptive purpose and redemptive plan. So if you yank this out of the doctrine of Christ, out of Scripture, you mess up God's plan and program when He will culminate all things.

What a conclusion when Christ comes back! "Every eye will see Him." And Philippians 2:10-11 says, "Every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Number seven, the judgment of Satan demands that Jesus Christ return. Satan will be bound for 1,000 years, at the end of which he will be thrown into "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:10) and be in hell for all eternity. So Satan will be eliminated when Christ comes back.

And number eight, the groaning of creation demands the return of Christ, Romans 8. All creation is groaning. I groan as I get older. All creation groans and travails; it "eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19), which is the Second Coming. So Jesus Christ will come and renew the earth, and bring "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1).

So verse 40 is key: the Son of Man comes; it's a fact of the event. But you don't know the hour. When you think it won't happen, He will come. It's unexpected in its time.

The second section of our text is in verses 41-48. "Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?'" (verse 41). So evidently the first section was a parable that Jesus gave. In this second section, we have the importance of readiness.

Had Peter not asked this question, I'm not so sure that Jesus would have answered him as He did, in verses 42-48. And it's interesting, in verse 42, that Jesus answers Peter's question with a question. Jesus loved to do that.

I heard of a Jewish student who asked his rabbi, "Why is it that every time I ask you a question, you answer me with a question?"

The rabbi replied, "Why shouldn't I?" I like that.

So Jesus answered a question with a question. And Peter asked what the others were only thinking but didn't have the courage to ask. Peter was the spokesman for the group. I believe that Jesus' answer indicates He was speaking to anyone who is called as His disciple to follow Him and wants to be His faithful steward and be rewarded when He comes.

In verses 42-44, we have the faithful and wise steward. This is another image. The first image was of a master who was away at a wedding. He came back and the servants were waiting for him. In the second image, the master of the house didn't watch for the thief, so his house was broken into. This third image is of a person who is a faithful steward and is blessed because of his faithful stewardship. This is a beatitude; he's blessed of the Lord, because he's watching and waiting.

"And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.'"

Now in verses 45-46, we have the foolish and unfaithful servant. "But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming....'" A lot of people feel that way today; they say Jesus is not coming back. They set dates and believe He'll come then. In 1988, there was a book written titled, *Eighty-Eight Reasons Why Jesus is Coming in 1988*. It didn't happen. They were foolish projections and dates. If anyone sets a date for the Lord's coming, don't listen to them. Then there are others who disregard the doctrine completely and are not living with expectation or allow it to influence the way they live.

The foolish servant says, "My master is delaying his coming..." that's a very dangerous thing to say "...and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk." Not only was he not looking for his master's return, he was beating the servants and was eating and drinking with the drunken. "The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two..." or "put him aside" or "cut him out" "...and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

So in verses 42-44, we have the picture of the faithful and wise steward. In verses 45-46, we have the picture of the foolish and unfaithful servant, steward or slave.

When Jesus Christ comes back, there will be a day of reckoning. The faithful, righteous servant

will be blessed, will be rewarded. That's who we want to be. But the wicked servant will be put aside, separated from God.

I don't believe that we should build on this statement, especially on verse 46, that says, "appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" that this is a Christian who lost his salvation. I believe the clear teaching of Scripture is that a born-again believer, one who has truly been regenerated, can never lose their salvation. They are saved. But you can lose your rewards.

The description here would better fit what we would call a "false Christian" or a "false believer," one who is a professor but not a possessor. That is someone who claims to be a Christian but is not really saved. It's like a Judas Iscariot: looks like a disciple, talks like a disciple, acts like a disciple, walks like a disciple but is not the real deal. So you shouldn't build a doctrine of losing your salvation on this picture, to the neglect of the clear, didactic teaching in the New Testament epistles, which overwhelmingly affirms the security of a true believer.

It does say that these false people will be separated and will be sent to punishment in hell.

The closing is in verses 47-48, the consequence of Christ's coming. Remember that everything from verse 42-48 is Jesus' answer to Peter's question, in verse 41. "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few." So notice the contrast: beaten with many stripes and beaten with few stripes. "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

knowledge brings responsibility. "To whom much is given...much will be required." That's why the Bible says, "Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that [you] shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1).

This teaching freaked me out all week. I almost had somebody else preach for me today. It says not to be a teacher, because you'll be held accountable for what you know. If you come to church on a regular basis and you're learning the Word of God, you are accountable, you are responsible to implement and use what God has trusted to you. You need to be a faithful and wise steward. God has given you talents, so don't bury them in the ground. Use them to glorify God. So the principle being taught is that knowledge brings responsibility: "To whom much is given...much will be required."

But it also teaches, as other passages do, that there are degrees of reward in heaven, and there are degrees of punishment in hell. When we get to heaven, not every Christian will be rewarded the same. There will be some who will be given rewards, opportunities and privileges that others will not have. This is why we want to hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Don't let this freak you out; you're going to heaven, because you're saved. But based on Scripture, when we get to heaven, we will say that we were unprofitable servants, doing only

what was our duty. But God is going to reward us for our service, reward us for our faithfulness.

How faithful have you been in using your time, your talent and your treasure for the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom?

God is going to call you into question, which is known as the “bema” or “reward seat of Christ.” The bema seat is for Christians; it is a judgment for believers. It is not judgment for our sin or punishment, but it is rewarding us for our service. Our service will either be like “wood, hay, straw” that “will be revealed by fire”—what happens when fire is put to wood or hay or straw? It is burned up—or our service will be like “gold, silver, precious stones.” When gold and silver and precious stones are put in the fire, they are purified. So it all depends on our motive, on our faithfulness, on whether we did it for the glory of God or for our own glory whether we are rewarded or not. We want to be rewarded on that day.

We don’t want to be ashamed at His coming. I’ve had people question that thought. In 1 John 2:28, it says, “Abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” The thought that when Christ comes back, even Christians, who are saved and going to heaven, are ashamed, because they didn’t faithfully serve the Lord.

I’m not talking about doing anything in the energy of the flesh. I am saying that if God gives you knowledge, use it. If He gives you opportunities, use them. If God gives you gifts and talents, use them. It’s living for Him. Don’t be a hypocrite, don’t be covetous, don’t worry, don’t be earth-focused or live for the things of this world. “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:20-21).

That’s what this is saying: live for eternity. Jesus is calling us to discipleship. And we have examined our lives.

You ask, “How can I get ready for the Lord’s return?”

Be saved. Trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ. Live a godly life. Let your loins be girded and your light be burning. And serve Him every day.

I want to make a point before I end. These verses were not given to teach prophetic truth. There are other verses that do that. The Olivet Discourse, in Luke 21, does that. We will study it in depth. But the verses in our text are simply saying, “Be ready.”

But I want you to understand that before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, we, the church, will be “caught up...to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). This is the rapture, which is not revealed in the Old Testament; it is a New Testament revelation. It is for the church. But the rapture is not a “coming” of the Lord; it is a “catching away.” So the church will be raptured when Jesus comes for the church. But in the Second Coming, Jesus comes with the church to the earth.

So we, as believers today, live with a constant expectation that we could be raptured at any moment. The Bible teaches that the rapture is the imminent hope of the believer. Nothing else needs to happen before the rapture happens. If the rapture happened now, there would be a whole parking lot of cars people could choose from.

Are you ready? Have you repented of your sins? Have you believed in Jesus Christ? Are you living for eternity?

“Only one life ‘twill soon be past.

Only what's done for Christ will last.”