

KEEP YOUR LAMPS LIT FOR JESUS' RETURN

I. [Luke 12:35-48](#)

A. Luke 12 began by describing a large crowd of thousands--all gathering to see and hear Jesus. So many came they were falling all over one another. But instead of projecting a loudly-voiced sermon to the multitude, He began teaching the disciples first. We can imagine a large hush falling on that crowd and seeing them press in close, just to catch a glimpse of Jesus and hear a word of two.

B. Jesus covers a lot of ground with a minimal amount of words. If the themes could be broken down into subheadings, they might include, "*Warnings Against Pharisees*;" "*Fearing God as Judge*;" "*Trusting God Who Cares to Provide*;" "*Acknowledging God at All Costs*;" "*Treasures in Heaven vs Treasures on Earth*;" and "*Replacing Worry and Anxiety with Complete Trust in God*."

C. Today we see Jesus use a couple parables to urge watchfulness and readiness regarding His eventual return. What makes this interesting is that most are clueless as to why He's here, let alone that He will depart and later return. The disciples had hints He was the Messiah. The Jewish leaders thought He was either a blasphemous false messiah or a messenger of Satan. And the gathering crowds, who were amazed at His teachings, considered Him a mere prophet.

D. Luke 12:35-48 (ESV) Awaiting Christ's return with hopeful expectancy...

1) **V35: 35** *Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, (Keep your loins girded; in uniform not in pajamas.)*

2) **V36-37: 36** *and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. (Not passively awake but actively awake.) Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. (Do you know a Master with a heart to serve? Yes we do! Jesus says in Mark 10:45 "The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.")*

3) **V38: 38** *If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! (During the times when most people are asleep, there are those who keep watch around the clock, to serve and protect, to rescue and render care. But Jesus is talking about a spiritual vigilance, being "on duty" for Him and others.)*

4) **V39-40: (Now He switches parables.) 39** *But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Some will welcome Jesus' return as the Messiah, others like a thief breaking in!)*

5) **V41-43: 41** *Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" (More from Peter before we close.) 42 And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. (Verse 43 is the perfect summation of this message!)*

6) **V44-48: 44** *Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45 But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. 47 And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. 48 But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.*

E. Ever try to eat sweet corn while it's still in the husk? You need to shuck it down first! Let's summarize all this with statements that I hope are not overly simplistic:

1) **Jesus is coming back.**

2) **Jesus is coming back physically.** (We will see Him in His resurrected body just like the disciples, the women, His mother, the five hundred, and all the rest.)

3) **We don't know when He's coming back.** (Only God knows! The one who thinks He kinda knows and the one who's certain he knows--neither dude knows!)

4) **Jesus can return anytime He wants to return.** (Let's remove all prerequisites as to how and when He returns. We know what He said about returning but we don't necessarily know what He meant by everything He said. His first coming was prophesied for thousands of years and misinterpreted by almost everyone. Magi from the east had a better idea than Jewish scholars in Jerusalem. His second return has been debated for two millennia by wiser men than you and me!)

5) God calls us to be ready for His return. (Being watchful and ready does not mean being passive, complacent, or off duty. When the boss returns, we don't want him to find us playing poker in the break room. When the coach returns to practice, we don't want him to find us soaking in the whirlpool. When you return from date night with your wife, you don't want to find your kids playing in the street in their underwear while the babysitter's making out with her boyfriend on your couch! And being ready has nothing to do with apocalyptic bunkers stocked with freeze-dried rations. Ask Christian refugees from Syria and Iraq about tribulation or brothers & sisters in North Korean concentration camps. Meanwhile we have the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. We're called to obey and be transformed. Francis of Assisi, hoeing in his garden, was asked, "What would you do if you knew Christ were coming back today?" He answered, "I would keep right on hoeing.") **So remember this:** "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes!")

F. 2 Peter 3:1-18 (NLT) Peter writes the following words 30-some years after he asked Jesus his Luke 12 question. **See how it coincides and clarifies what is to come:** **1** This is my second letter to you, dear friends (**Gk Agapētos - dearly beloved**), and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. **2** I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. **3** Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. **(The end times or last days began 2,000 years ago.)** **4** They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created." **5** They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of His command, and He brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. **(Creation)** **6** Then He used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. **(Noah's flood)** **7** And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed. **(Think transition vs annihilation.)** **8** But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. **9** The Lord isn't really being slow about His promise, as some people think. No, He is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. **10** But the Day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, **(OV a roar!)** and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. **11** Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, **12** looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that Day, He will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. **13** But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth He has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness. **14** And so, dear friends (**Agapētos**), while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in His sight. **(On active duty!)** **15** And remember, our Lord's patience gives people time to be saved. This is what our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him-- **16** speaking of these things in all of his letters. Some of his comments are hard to understand, and those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his letters to mean something quite different, just as they do with other parts of Scripture. **(Peter equates Paul's letters with Scripture!)** And this will result in their destruction. **17** You already know these things, dear friends (**Agapētos**). So be on guard; then you will not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people and lose your own secure footing. **18** Rather, you must grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All glory to Him, both now and forever! Amen.

G. Augustine sums up this message perfectly: "He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, steadfast hope and fervent love."

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[Luke 12:35-48 \(ESV\)](#)

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2 Peter 3:1-18 (NLT)

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Francis of Assisi on Jesus' Return

Francis of Assisi, hoeing in his garden, was asked, "What would you do if you knew Christ were coming back today?" He answered, "I would keep right on hoeing."

Quote by Augustine

"He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with sincere faith, stead-fast hope and fervent love."

Film Clips & Other Links

John Piper, Doug Wilson, and Tim Chester Talk Eschatology

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HS8T7u4Tuls>

The Doctrine of End Times - Interview with Sam Storms

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SpOBskIjHQ>

An Evening of Eschatology - John Piper, Sam Storms, Doug Wilson, & Jim Hamilton

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W75bzrvJtLs>

Church, Christians, and Sleeping in Church - Tim Hawkins

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47hK3C7XQW8>

Bonus Stuff

Hebrews 1:1-4 (ESV)

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, **2** but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. **3** He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **4** having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Quote by William Free!

"As Christians, we should not be exitists, looking for our going, but adventists, looking for His coming.

Quote by Billy Graham

"The end will come with the return of Jesus Christ . . . That is why a Christian can be an optimist. That is why a Christian can smile in the midst of all that is happening . . . We know what the end will be: the triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Quote by John C. Ryle

"What will you see when the great event of Christ's return takes place? You will see the eternal Son of God return in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will come to raise the dead saints and to change the living ones, to punish the wicked and to reward the godly."

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side."

- C.S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*.

Quote by R.T. France

"In His coming the "last days" to which the Old Testament looked forward arrived, but they have not yet run their course; the Christian church is still living in this eschaton. Jesus' first coming inaugurated it; His second coming will consummate it. The coming of Jesus was, therefore, the beginning of the end."

Quote by Arthur W. Pink

"The first time [Christ] came to slay sin in men. The second time He will come to slay men in sin."

Quote by G. Campbell Morgan

"To me the second coming is the perpetual light on the path which makes the present bearable. I never lay my head on the pillow without thinking that perhaps before the morning breaks, the final morning may have dawned. I never begin my work without thinking that He may interrupt my work and begin His own. This is now His word to all believing souls, 'Till I come.' We are not looking for death, we are looking for Him."

Quote by Vance Havner

"Some of the saints are SINGING about the Second Coming, but it is one thing just to sing the national anthem during the war and quite another to go into battle. The best evidence that the Lord's return has really gotten hold of us is when we occupy till He come, do business for God, buy up the opportunities, because the days are evil."

Quote by Vance Havner

"The early believers were not looking for something to happen, they were looking for Someone to come. Looking for the train to arrive is one thing, but looking for someone we love to come on that train is another matter...With regard to our Lord's return, we emphasize preparation without expectation. Of course, all too generally nothing is said of His return at all. Bringing in the Kingdom is preached, but not bringing back the King....I'm not looking for signs. We've had plenty of them. I'm listening for a sound. Every time you see a scoffer who says there are no signs of His coming, you've just seen another sign. I'm listening for a shout."

Quote by Randy Alcorn

"It's curious that the Church has become the most tightfisted at the very time in history when God has provided most generously. There's considerable talk about the end of the age, and many people seem to believe that Christ will return in their lifetime. But why is it that expecting Christ's return hasn't radically influenced our giving? Why is it that people who believe in the soon return of Christ are so quick to build their own financial empires--which prophecy tells us will perish--and so slow to build God's kingdom?"

- Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*.