

**“Be Ready”**  
*September 6, 2020*  
Luke 12:35-48

## **I. Introduction**

With the covid-19 pandemic still around and affecting our daily lives, with the continuing protests and violence in the nation and the world, with the wildfires in the west and the hurricanes and storms in the south, we definitely are living in troubled and perilous times. You don't have to listen to too many conversations before you hear someone mention the tribulation, the end times, or the events described in the Book of Revelation. The Bible teaches that human history will end when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth to take His people to be with Him, establishes His kingdom, and punishes the wicked. Scripture is as clear and trustworthy on Christ's second coming as it is historical on His first coming. For example, after Jesus had ascended into heaven, angels appeared to those gathered there and said in [Acts 1:11](#), “Men of Galilee why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” In [Revelation 22:12](#), Jesus said, “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”

Before Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and His millennial kingdom, the tribulation will take place for seven long years ([Revelation 6-19](#)). It will be an unprecedented outpouring of divine judgment. Before the tribulation there will be the rapture of the church, i.e., believers, which will set in motion all the other events. At the rapture Christ will come for His saints; He will meet them in the air to take them to be with Him in heaven—[turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#). Today's Scripture reveals that the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming is both certain and uncertain. In [verse 40](#) Jesus said, “You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come [the event is certain] at an hour when you do not expect him [the time is uncertain].”

Jesus has just explained to His disciples that they needed to beware of hypocrisy, to watch out for greed, and not to worry. The best way to conquer these temptations is to look ahead to the Lord's return. If

one is ready at all times for His return, it will be difficult for the things of the world to trap him or us. So, as He continued to train His disciples, Jesus challenged them to remain ready for His return at all times and he told them why such readiness is important.

## II. Challenge to Be Ready

**A. Be dressed for service.** Jesus used four analogies or pictures to urge His hearers to be ready for His return, beginning with clothing—He said, **“Be dressed ready for service.”** The Greek phrase is *“Let your loins be girded about.”* This takes into account the long, flowing robes worn by both men and women in Jesus’ day. Before they could work, fight, or run, their robes had to be tucked under their sash or belt. For example, as the people of Israel prepared for the first Passover meal, God commanded them in **Exodus 12:11**, **“This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.”** In **1 Peter 1:13** Peter wrote, **“Gird up the loins of your mind.”** Jesus’ words are a call for continual readiness as Christians anticipate His imminent return.

**B. Keep your lamps burning.** Jesus then said, **“Keep your lamps burning.”** Lamps have one job—to provide light. Followers of Jesus Christ must be on constant watch, even in the midst of the darkest night. Light is often a figure for knowledge. People need to be watchful and make certain that their lamp of knowledge doesn’t go out, i.e., they aren’t to be ignorant of God’s truths and stumbling around in darkness. **Turn to Romans 13:11-14.** Because Jesus could return at any time, people need to keep alert, having their lamps always lit—behaving decently—and not wandering in spiritual darkness.

**C. Be like servants waiting for their master’s return.** Jesus went on to say that His disciples should be **“like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet.”** Weddings in ancient Israel didn’t start or stop at a specific time. It all depended on how many people were there and how long the food and drink lasted. The bridegroom’s servants would have to wait for their master to come home with his bride.

The new husband would certainly not want to be kept waiting at the door with his bride. The servants had to be sure they were ready to go to welcome him immediately.

The remarkable thing in this story is that the master will serve his servants! In Jewish weddings, the bride is treated like a queen and the groom like a king. But Jesus said that to demonstrate the master's pleasure at the readiness of his servants, the master "will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them." No matter when he arrived, even if it were "in the second or third watch," i.e., 9 pm or 3 am, His ready servants would be blessed.

**D. His coming will be unannounced and unexpected.** Jesus finally used the picture of a thief who comes unannounced and unexpected to illustrate His point. If people knew when a burglar would try to enter their house, they would be prepared and take measures for protection. So also, believers must be constantly ready, since the Son of Man's, i.e., Jesus', coming will be unannounced and unexpected. In [Revelation 3:3](#), Jesus warned the church at Sardis, "Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you."

Jesus summarized the point He was trying to make by saying, "You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Jesus' followers must be continually ready for His return because there is no way to know for certain when He will appear. [Turn to 2 Peter 3:10-14.](#) We need to be ready by continually pursuing a godly life.

### III. The Importance of Readiness

Peter, understanding what Jesus was saying, but acting as the spokesman for the rest, "asked, 'Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?'" Jesus didn't answer Peter directly, instead He answered with yet another parable, one involving two servants. The first is faithful and represents believers who are ready for Christ's return and will be blessed. The other is unfaithful and represents unbelievers, who are not

ready for His return and will be punished. Since all people fall into one of these two categories, Jesus' parable included everyone.

**A. First, the Faithful Servant** The “faithful and wise manager” or servant represents genuine believers. They carry out the work assigned to them by God using the talents and gifts He has given them—like the faithful manager “whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time.” And because of their faithfulness, they are ready for Christ's return—

1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

Jesus said, “He will put him in charge of all his master's possessions.” In a similar parable in Matthew 25:21 Jesus said, “His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’” When He returns Jesus, too, will reward those who have faithfully carried out His will. Just as the master did, Jesus will also give His faithful servants responsibilities in the kingdom.

**B. The Unfaithful Servant** In contrast to the faithful servant, there is the unfaithful servant. He lacked any sense of urgency and continued to do whatever made him happy, this included beating “the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk.” Instead of being faithful with those in his care, he used and abused them for his own gluttonous and drunken pleasure. He lived under the illusion that he had plenty of time to enjoy his sin before his master returned.

Many people live their lives under the same illusion; they have heard the Gospel, but they assume they can do as they please and turn to God just before the end. Such thinking is both foolish and dangerous; no one knows when he or she will die, or when the Lord will return. Demonstrating the danger of such faulty reasoning, the unfaithful servant miscalculated the time of his master's return—“The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.” In a drastic and severe act of punishment, symbolizing God's judgment on the wicked, the master “cut him to pieces and

assign him a place with the unbelievers.” This place for the unprepared servant, this place for unbelievers, is an eternity in hell where Jesus said in [Matthew 24:51](#), “There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

But while all unbelievers will be sentenced to hell, Jesus made it clear that the degree of punishment will vary by using examples of two other types of unfaithful servants. The first was “The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants.” This servant wasn't defiant, like the 1<sup>st</sup>, he was just distracted. He didn't defy his master, but he didn't obey him either. So, he was also unprepared when his master returned. Unlike the defiant servant who received the severe punishment of being cut into pieces, this 2<sup>nd</sup> servant will receive a somewhat lesser punishment and “will be beaten with many blows.” A third servant did “not know” his master's will. His ignorance did not keep him from being punished, since he did “things deserving of punishment.” However, he received the least severe punishment—he was “beaten with few blows.”

Jesus' closing words provided the basis for the differing degrees of punishment in hell. “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” The degree of punishment for unbelievers is directly related to their knowledge of the truth. The more people know, the more dangerous it is for them to reject the gospel. In light of Christ's imminent return, to defiantly reject the gospel, to be indifferent to it, or to be ignorant is risking eternal tragedy. [2 Corinthians 6:2](#) says, “I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.”

#### IV. Conclusion

Jesus' words of warning to us is the same as they were for His disciples—Be Ready. Don't be surprised, Jesus is coming back—since we don't know when, always be prepared. Walk in the light, don't wander off into darkness and do what you shouldn't do. How embarrassing to be found wallowing in sin when Jesus returns. Don't get tired of waiting. It is so human to start out strong but to slowly lose enthusiasm. Keep your head up—He promised that He would return. In [John 14:3](#) Jesus said, “And if I go

and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Matthew 24:42 says, “Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

So, we work and wait expectantly, not knowing exactly when He may return. This uncertainty has a warning with it. Though Scripture tells us to keep watching and be ready, it compares Jesus’ return to a thief in the night. We cannot know exactly when He will return, and we should be suspicious of anyone who dates His return. Instead, we should concentrate on being faithful the whole time He is gone and look forward to the day when our Lord appears. **Turn to Matthew 25:1-13.**