

## The Importance of Being Ready for the Lord's Return

Luke 12:35-59

*Luke 12:35-40: "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; **36** 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.*

***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. **38** And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. **39** 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.*

***40** Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

### Background Notes

In the previous section of this chapter, the Lord emphasized that His disciples should lay up treasure in Heaven and not on this earth because "where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be also." In verses 35-40 the Lord moved on to stress the importance of being ready for His return - watching and waiting, because He could return at any time.

The Lord used the illustration of a 1st century wedding to emphasize His point. After the wedding feast, the groom would return home with his bride, and he expected his servants to be watching and waiting for him - even if he didn't arrive until late at night or in the wee hours of the morning.

It's important to realize that the intended meaning of this parable is not to teach the details of eschatology or the End Times, although some details may be included. For example, there is no need necessarily to make the wedding feast in the parable represent either the Marriage Supper of the Lamb or the Messianic banquet when the Lord returns and sets up His earthly Millennial Kingdom. And to read the Rapture into this parable may be more than the Lord intended, because this would limit the teaching of being ready for His return to the future Tribulation saints, who would be represented by the servants in the parable.

It's better to see that the Lord's main point in the parable is for all believers (both now and during the Tribulation period) to be watching, waiting and ready for His return. His return will be sudden and unexpected, like a groom returning home with his bride after a wedding, or like a thief who doesn't announce his coming ahead of time (verse 39)!

Being ready for His return certainly applies to both the Rapture of the Church and the Return of the Lord to this earth to set up His Kingdom. The wonderful news here is that not only will the Lord return, but that there is a special blessing for those who are watching and waiting expectantly for His return: the Lord Himself will serve these faithful servants! What an unexpected and amazing blessing!

Will you be one of those believers who will receive this blessing? Are you watching and waiting, with your light shining? Good question for all of us, isn't it?

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. There will be differences of punishment in hell.

*Verses 41-48: Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" 42 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? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 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 and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 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. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. 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.*

What was the Lord's answer to Peter's question - "Lord, do you speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" In essence, He told Peter that He was speaking to all folks who are followers and servants of the Lord - and that certainly includes us. Faithful and sensible servants will be rewarded, and they will be given responsibilities in the future Millennial Kingdom that our Lord will set up on this earth when He returns.

But we also see that some professing servants are unfaithful, and by their actions they prove that they are unbelievers. They will be consigned a place with the rest of the unbelievers – in hell. Matthew 25:46 says that there is eternal punishment in hell: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into eternal life." This verse teaches that there is eternal punishment in hell, but Luke 12:47-48 teach that there will be differences of punishment in hell. Some will receive "many lashes" and some will receive "few." "That servant who knew his master's will and did not prepare himself to do according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes, but he who did not know yet committed things deserving stripes shall be beaten with few." Just as there will be differences of reward in Heaven, so there will be differences of punishment in hell.

The basis for punishment will depend on how much knowledge a person has. To whom much is given, much is required. There will be differences of punishment in hell.

## 2. There are divisions of families on earth.

*Verses 49-53: "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."*

In verse 49, the Lord referred to the fiery judgment that will take place before He returns. But before that judgment takes place, the Lord Himself would undergo a baptism of judgment at the cross, the judgment of God against our sins (v50). As a result of our Lord's first coming, there will be division. Because Christianity is unique and distinct from all other world religions, there will be divisions in general society, and the Lord would cause divisions in the family as well. How true this prophecy has proven to be! Because of the coming of Christ and the coming of Christianity, non-Christian parents have disowned Christian children, and Christian parents disowned by non-Christian children. Because of Christ there are divisions of families on earth.

## Practical Application

### 1. Get right with God before it is too late.

*Verses 54-59: Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. 55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. 56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 57 "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? 58 When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."*

In verse 54 the Lord was addressing the whole crowd that would have been composed primarily of unbelievers. He called them "hypocrites" because they accepted the evidence from nature about the weather, but they didn't accept the overwhelming evidence that He was the Messiah! What more evidence did they want than what they had already been given?

It's like unbelievers today who would be completely convinced that intelligent extra-terrestrials exist if we would receive just a few non-random signals from outer space - and yet at the same time they deny the overwhelming evidence for intelligent design in the DNA code! The Lord would call this hypocrisy - which it certainly is!

In verses 57-59 the Lord moved on to tell the crowd that in view of the evidence, they should get right with God before it was too late. And there is no "second chance." Yes, God is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice, and He must deal with the sin of unbelief. He is the ultimate magistrate, judge, and police officer (v58). There is no escaping God's judgment apart from Christ. Get right with God before it's too late!

## **2. Don't use Luke 12:59 as a proof-text for purgatory.**

Verse 59: *"I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."* Some folks have tried to use this verse as support for the doctrine of purgatory, a place of purging after death. The Bible does not teach the doctrine of purgatory. This verse is not speaking of a place called purgatory – it is speaking of hell (just as in verse 46). Hell is the place for the final consignment of unbelievers.

Our Lord's point here is that there is no escape from hell, because no one would ever be able to pay the penalty for every sin that they have ever committed. The only escape from eternal hell is to get right with God now by accepting the gift of salvation in Christ. He died to pay every last cent of the penalty for our sins. So don't use Luke 12:59 as a proof-text for purgatory.