

BE YE THEREFORE READY

TEXT: LUKE 12:35-40

INTRODUCTION:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back to earth. According to Scripture, He will come suddenly, and He will come unexpectedly.
2. And He wants us to be ready. Are you ready?
3. This passage has many references to the second coming of Christ:
 - * Verse 35 speaks of preparation and readiness
 - * Verse 36 -- "wait...he will return...he cometh."
 - * Verse 37 -- "watching"
 - * Verse 39 -- "watched"
 - * Verse 40 -- "Be ye therefore ready also."
4. I have entitled tonight's message, "Be Ye Therefore Ready" (12:40).

I. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO OUR LORD FINDS WATCHING (12:35-37).

1. Note the word "blessed" (12:37, 38, 43). "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching" (12:37) means we are to maintain an attitude of expectancy while we wait for our Lord's return.
2. To "watch" means to be ready, to be alert, not to be caught by surprise.
3. This must be our attitude toward the second coming of Christ.
4. In the Orient, a bridegroom first had a wedding supper with his friends, then he went to the house of his bride to claim her. Then he returned to his house with his bride.
5. Although it might be very late, he expected his servants to be properly dressed ("let your loins be girded about" – 12:35).
6. In our Lord's day, men wore long flowing robes as their outer garments. When they worked, or when they walked, or when they ran, it was necessary to gird up or tie up their robes with a belt or girdle about the body, so that it might not impede their progress.
7. Therefore, "to gird up the loins" means to be ready, to be active, to be diligent, to be ready to move.
8. And the lord expected his servants to be up waiting for him ("and your lights burning" – 12:35).
9. The Roman watch was three hours long. The night was divided into four watches. If the Lord came in the second watch it would still be dark.
10. If He came in the third watch it would be before the morning dawned.

11. Whenever the Lord comes He expects to find His servants waiting for Him. That is why He says, "Blessed are those servants."
12. Our Lord makes His application very clear in Luke 12:40. He is coming back at any time and we need to be ready. Are you ready?
13. The great evangelist, R.A. Torrey, was holding meetings up in Canada and a printer printed thousands of cards with just these words printed on one side: "Get ready to meet God," and on the other side was the information (time, location, etc.) for the meetings. Again, allow me ask -- Are you ready? Are you watching?
14. The Bible uses different figures to describe the second coming. One is that of the bridegroom coming for his bride. This speaks of blessing for those who are watching and waiting (cf. Matt. 25:1-13).
15. While this is a joyous occasion for those who are ready, it will be a horrible time for those who are not. You can imagine the grief and despair of a man who is stood up at the altar on his wedding day, but what about the man who is rejected by our Lord (cf. Matt. 25:10-13).
16. The key here is, "Watch therefore" (Matt. 25:13). The Lord wants us to be watching for His return. Are you watching?
17. Another figure seen often in the Bible is of a thief coming unexpectedly. This is a warning to those who are not watching and are not waiting (cf. Luke 12:39, 40).
18. First Thessalonians 5:2, 3 says, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."
19. Our Lord said to the church in Sardis, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Rev. 3:3).
20. No one knows when a thief will come, and no one knows the time of our Lord's return (Luke 12:39, 40). Whenever you hear of some preacher setting dates, you can mark it down, he does not know what he is talking about.
21. Our Lord said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).
22. I recall that before he died Harold Camping repented of his date-setting, but unfortunately much damage had already been done.
23. The Seventh Day Adventist cult traces its beginnings to the date-setting of a Baptist preacher from upstate NY named William Miller.
24. Based upon a misunderstanding of Daniel 8:14, Mr. Miller originally said the Lord would return in 1843, and then when that didn't happen, he changed

it to 1844. When the Lord did not return in 1844, Miller gave up his date-setting.

25. He acknowledged he had been wrong to set dates and he apologized, but the damage was done and the Seventh Day Adventist cult began.

II. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO OUR LORD FINDS WORKING (LUKE 12:41-44).

1. Peter asked our Lord to explain the first parable (12:41). Our Lord answered him by giving them another parable (12:42).
2. Therefore, to properly understand the first parable, we need to understand the second. And to understand the second, we must understand what a "steward" is (12:42).
3. A steward is someone who manages another's affairs for them.
4. Eliezer of Damascus was the steward of Abraham's house (Gen. 15:2).
5. God has appointed us His stewards. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."
6. Are you a "faithful and wise steward" (Luke 12:42)? There is always the temptation to laziness and carelessness when the boss is not present.
7. It often happens that the boss walks in unexpectedly and finds some employees "slacking off."
8. An employer values workers who work just as hard in his absence as when he is around keeping an eye on things (12:43).
9. Faithful, dependable servants are promoted to a greater stewardship because of their diligence in a lesser position (12:44).
10. But on the other hand, the servant is in serious trouble who says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken" (12:45, 46).
11. He is in for a rude awakening. His judgment will come "at an hour when he is not aware" (12:46).
12. It should be noted that this is a parable. Our Lord is not teaching that all wicked sinners will be "cut in sunder" at the second coming of Christ (12:46).
13. It is the lord of the wicked and slothful servant who, upon returning, judges the one who had misused his position and betrayed his trust.
14. But the application is clear (cf. 12:47, 48).
15. It is the solemn fact that the Lord will return unexpectedly that is emphasized in these parables. It was not our Lord's intention here to distinguish between rewards and punishment; or the judgment seat and the Great White Throne Judgment; or the rapture and His return at the end of the

tribulation period. These are parables teaching readiness in light of our Lord's return.

16. When a person ignores the fact that Christ is coming back in judgment, he is in grave danger (Luke 12:45-48).
17. I tremble for those who come to church and hear Gospel preaching but refuse to get right with God. Our Lord says they "shall be beaten with many stripes" (12:47, 48).
18. Albert Barnes said, "They who have many privileges, who are often warned, who have the gospel, and do not repent and believe, shall be far more severely punished than others. They who are early taught in Sunday schools, or by pious parents, or in other ways, and who grow up in sin and impenitence, will have much more to answer for than those who have no such privileges...Our Lord says that *he that knew not* -- that is, he who had comparatively little knowledge -- would suffer a punishment proportionally light. He refers, doubtless, to those who have fewer opportunities, smaller gifts, or fewer teachers."
19. If you hear God's Word, then believe God's Word. Get things right with God and start working.
20. But you do not start working till you first get saved (John 3:16).

III. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO OUR LORD FINDS STANDING

1. It is not easy taking a stand for God in this wicked, sin-loving world.
2. "Fire" (12:49) speaks of judgment, and "straitened" (12:50) means "pressed."
3. This same Greek word translated "straitened" is translated "pressed" in Acts 18:5, where it says that "Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."
4. Our Lord divides people (12:51). He said in Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Genuine faith in Christ divides people, even families (12:51-53).
5. Unsaved friends and loved ones often try to pressure us to compromise in our walk with the Lord. They often try and plan activities that will conflict with church services.
6. Beloved, do not let worldly people, even those that are close relatives, keep you from serving the Lord.

IV. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO OUR LORD FINDS WAITING

1. Our Lord rebuked "the people" for their hypocrisy and lack of discernment (12:54-56; cf. 12:41).

2. Early in the week the weatherman said we would get snow Friday evening. I was in Loew's on Tuesday morning, and people were busy buying shovels and salt, etc. They were preparing for the snow storm.
3. Men can accurately predict a snowstorm or a hurricane, but they are blind to spiritual things (12:54-56).
4. As a matter of fact, worldly men are very happy when you talk to them about the weather. But if you start talking about the Bible, they soon get angry!
5. But beloved, the storm clouds of God's wrath are moving on the horizon. Prepare to meet thy God! "Discern the time" (Luke 12:56).
6. First Chronicles 12:32 says that the children of Issachar, "were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."
7. We need men like that today. Men who have "understanding of the times," to know what they ought to do.
8. Our Lord goes from discerning the weather to settling a dispute with an adversary (12:58, 59). When men are involved in a lawsuit, they usually try and settle out of court. They wish to avoid the lengthy and expensive process of a trial and possible punishment.
9. Yet when it comes to the most important judgment bar of all, the one up yonder in heaven, men are very careless (12:57-59).
10. Our Lord is trying to impress upon His listeners the urgency of getting things right with God. Because when God finally condemns a man, the penalty will be inflicted to the uttermost, and there will be no appeal (12:58, 59).

CONCLUSION:

1. When people receive a letter notifying them of a lawsuit, normally they contact an attorney for help.
2. When they know a big storm is coming, they prepare for it -- shovels, food, salt, etc.
3. But something far more important is coming soon and most people ignore it.
4. A few years ago, I preached on the radio and I referred to the Johnstown Pennsylvania flood, which took place back in 1889. They say that 2,209 people died in that terrible flood -- because they were unprepared. There were numerous warnings but these warnings were not taken seriously.
5. A radio listener from Johnstown called my wife and told her she had relatives who drowned in the flood.
6. Civil engineers knew the dam was going to break and they warned the people but the people ignored the warnings.
7. A few months later, the engineers again examined the dam and again said to the people: "You are in danger. Watch out."

8. The people laughed and said, "That's what you said last time!"
9. Finally, the engineers came back yet a third time and once again they were mocked and ridiculed.
10. Fifteen days later, a boy on horseback came racing down the Conemaugh Valley yelling, "Run for your lives! The dam has broke and the water is coming!"
11. The people laughed at him too but in a few minutes the water came.
12. Within thirty minutes Johnstown, Pennsylvania was in ruins and more than 2,000 people drowned.
13. Our Lord is coming back. He has told us to be ready. But most people are ignoring His warnings and are laughing at His messengers.
14. But once the flood of His wrath is released it will be too late to repent. Like the foolish citizens of Johnstown, lost sinners will be swept away in judgment.
15. There is an old story I have heard many times and I am not sure who started telling it. It's a story about three devils who were talking to Satan and they said, "We want to go down to earth and ruin men." And so Satan said, "Okay, what is your plan?"
16. And the first devil said, "I'm going to tell them there's no God."
17. Satan said, "That will not work because most people know there's a God."
18. The second devil said, "I'm going to tell men there's no hell."
19. Satan said, "You may be able to deceive a few that way, but most people know there's a punishment for sin."
20. The third devil said, "I'll tell men there is a God in heaven, and there is eternal punishment in hell, but I will also tell them there is no hurry."
21. "Satan was happy, and said, "Go, that is a good plan!"