

Here He Comes

Scripture: Luke 12:35-48

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Jesus is coming back, and I'm here to tell you to get ready! Jesus Christ came to planet earth a little over 2,000 years ago and He promised He would come again.

Today's scripture announces: "Here He Comes!" and it's a serious call for us to prepare for eternity.

Read Luke 12:35-40.

Not all Christians agree on the sequence of the events of the Second Coming.

Here's what I believe will happen.

The next thing to happen on God's prophetic calendar will be the rapture of the church.

Jesus will come back in the clouds and in the twinkling of an eye, all Christians will disappear to be with Christ.

Those who are not saved will be left behind.

Then there will be seven years of tribulation on the earth, and then Christ will return at the Battle of Armageddon, defeat the Antichrist and his forces.

Then Jesus will set up a literal thousand-year kingdom on planet earth, based in Jerusalem.

After the thousand years, there will be the Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelation 20.

You don't have to agree with me about the sequence of these events, please Don't get hung up on the details.

Our main job is to be ready for His return.

But people have always been more interested in trying to figure out when Jesus is going to return than being ready.

In the 1980s NASA engineer Edgar Wisenhut used his mathematical skills to determine that Jesus would return in 1988

. He wrote a book entitled, "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Take Place in 1988."

He was so certain the rapture would happen on September 10, 1988, that he said, "If I'm wrong, then the scripture is mistaken."

He was wrong, but there's nothing wrong with the scripture.

Then in 1992, Harold Camping wrote a book entitled "1994" in which he predicted Jesus would return in 1994.

The next year, he wrote another book entitled, "Much More Evidence That 1994 Could Be the End of the World."

Wrong again.

Who can forget the whole Y2K mania? Wrong again.

Can you guess who made these statements?

This fascination of setting dates is nothing new.

But Jesus said in Matthew 24:36

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Anytime you hear someone start setting a date, you know immediately that they are off track.

As I've said before, when it comes to the Second Coming,

I'm not on the scheduling team, I'm on the welcoming team!

In our passage today, Jesus shares three mini-parables that teach us the importance of being ready for His return.

We should:

I. WATCH FOR THE BRIDEGROOM.

In Bible times Jewish weddings were wonderful celebrations.

From what I have read is:

that After a period of betrothal, the groom would sneak into the bride's house and try to slip away with her without anyone seeing him—it almost became a game.

Then he would take her back to his father's house for a celebration.

The wedding would include a great feast, much music, dancing and laughter.

Our weddings are really somber and sad compared to a Jewish wedding.

In most of the New Testament we are seen as the Bride of Christ, the church.

Jesus is coming to sneak away with us and take us to His Father's house.

He said He was going to prepare a place for us, and that He would return to take us to be with him. (See John 14:1).

14 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;[a] believe also in me.

In this parable however, we play the role of servants, so as we think about it, we should ask ourselves a couple of questions:

1. Am I excited about Jesus' return?

In this parable, the bridegroom has slipped away to get his bride, and we must wait for him to return to the house.

We don't know when he's coming back, so we must stay dressed up and keep our lamps burning so we can welcome him when he appears.

For sure, the servants of the bridegroom would have been anxiously waiting and watching.

They would be filled with joyous anticipation. Is that the way you feel about the Second Coming?

Are you excited about it, or is it something that makes you afraid to think about?

There really is going to be a wedding feast in heaven and it will be an experience of joy and celebration.

John saw a glimpse of this future wedding celebration

when he wrote in Revelation 19:7, 9:

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready ... (remember, the church is the bride)

Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (that would be the Old Testament saints and the tribulation saints).

But mainly notice it will be a time of rejoicing.

It's worth getting excited about.

Do you know what the last recorded words of Jesus are?

Take a second and turn to the very last page of your Bible.

That's the book of revelation, not the book of concordance or Maps, by the way.

In Revelation 22:20 we read the last recorded words of Jesus:

"Yes, I am coming soon."

Then notice how the Apostle John responded.

He said, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus."

Is that our attitude?

Are we as excited as a servant at a wedding celebration as we await the return of our master,
our friend?

Our excitement level about the Second Coming will help us answer the question

2. Am I ready for Jesus to return?

If we aren't very excited about the Second Coming, it may be we aren't ready for Him to return.

We may think we are ready, but are we really?

Let me use an analogy we might better understand.

Back years ago, on Monday nights in the fall, I would turn on the television and I hear the
wonderful song by Hank Williams Jr.:

"Are you ready for some football?"

I'm thinking, "Yeah, I'm ready for some football!"

I've got my remote control, my coca cola and some pretzels and popcorn:

I'm ready!

But am I really?

I'm ready to watch football, but not to play football.

Watching and playing isn't the same thing.

I used to play a little football and I know the difference.

Being an armchair quarterback is not the same thing as being a real quarterback.

Oklahoma Sooners Coach Bud Wilkinson used to say football was a sport where 22 men who
desperately need rest are on the field in front of 80,000 fans that desperately need exercise!

There's a huge difference between being a spectator and a participant.

Some of us listening today are basically Christian spectators.

We just show up and watch the show.

Here's the question: Are we ready for the Lord's return?

We may be thinking, "Yeah!"

But if we are merely a spectator, we aren't ready.

Worship is not a spectator sport.

There's a difference between an armchair Christian or a pew chair Christian and a real participant.

The next point will help us know if we are really ready.

We should:

II. WORK FOR THE MASTER.

In this parable, Jesus speaks about the servants being dressed for service.

As a servant, we don't work to earn our salvation; we work because we love our master.

Here's our next question:

1. Am I actively serving my Lord?

When Jesus returns will He find us hard at work, or will we just be an arm chair quarterback-Christian?

We need to clean up our Christian vocabulary.

We have created a whole category of incorrect lingo about Christians.

We tend to think the only "ministers" are the paid staff.

In the New Testament, the word "minister" means "servant" and every Christian is to be a servant.

So, every member of our church should be a minister.

Are we ministering for the Lord?

We have many different ministries here, and I hope the list will grow as members discover they are ministers and start new ministries to match their gifts.

Most men laugh at the Ameritrade commercial on television where the lazy husband is reclining on the couch and his bossy wife tells him to do ONE thing that day—establish an online investment account.

He says, "Sure." Then he watches television and goes to sleep.

He hears her car pull into the driveway and jumps up and runs to his computer.

With a couple of clicks he's signed up.

He rushes back to the couch just as she enters.

Her first question is, "Did you set up the account?"

His indignant reply is "Of course!"

Maybe we can wait for the last possible second to establish an online account, but we can't act that way with God.

We can't wait for the last second and suddenly jump into some ministry.

We won't hear Jesus pull into the driveway:

His return will be unexpected and in the twinkling of an eye!

Jesus is teaching there are some wonderful benefits to serving Him.

Someone once said that, "Serving the Lord doesn't pay very much but the retirement benefits are out of this world!"

Jesus says in verse 43:

'It will be GOOD for that servant whom the Master finds doing so when He returns.'" (Luke 12:43)

What will be so good about it?

Jesus says in verse 37 that He will dress as a servant and serve them!

I believe He's speaking of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb we read about in Revelation 19.

It's exactly what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

On the night before He was crucified, He took off his robe and took a servant's towel and went around washing the disciple's feet.

Can you imagine the King of the Universe serving you?

But that's what Jesus said.

2. Are we patiently waiting for our Lord?

I admit: I'm not very good at waiting.

I will drive out of my way to keep moving instead of waiting in a long line of cars.

Our entire society doesn't like to wait.
That's why we have fast food places.

We buy things with credit cards because we don't like to wait until we have the cash to pay for it.

We aren't very good waiters.

Yet, in verse 38 Jesus said we need to keep on watching and waiting even if the return of the master doesn't occur until the third or fourth watch of the night.

The Romans divided the night into four watches of three hours each.

The third watch ran from midnight to 3 a.m. and the fourth watch was 3-6 a.m.

That's the time most people are sleeping, when they are least expecting something to happen...and that's when Jesus will return.

So the message is that we must wait patiently even if it seems like His return has been delayed.

Now, I'm not a date-setter, but I can tell you that it's closer now than it's ever been before, so we'd better wake up out of our spiritual slumber!

There have always been people who have laughed at the idea of Jesus returning.

The Second Coming is rich material for Fallon and Maher.

It's nothing new.

The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:3, 8:

"Scoffers will come in the last days saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? ... all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." ...

do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

For many of us, it may seem like 2,000 years since Jesus made His promise to return, but for the Lord it only seems like a couple of days.

God's sense of timing is so different than ours.

That's why we must wait patiently, actively, and expectantly.

We must live each day as if He was going to return to planet earth today.

Finally, we should:

III. WARN Our NEIGHBORS.

In verse 39 Jesus changes images.

In the first image, Jesus is a loving master who returns and rewards His faithful servants.

In the second, He is a dreaded thief who comes and takes away what the homeowner treasures.

Why this drastic difference?

Forsome, the return of Jesus will be a blessed event that is to be joyously anticipated.

To others, the return of Christ will be a terrible, tragic event—like being ripped off.

What will make the difference?

A relationship.

Servants have a personal relationship with their master, but a homeowner has no relationship with a burglar.

Do you have a personal relationship with God?

If so, you won't fear His return, you'll look forward to it with joy.

Have you ever been robbed?

If you knew a thief was coming to your home tonight, what would you do?

If you knew a thief was coming to your neighbor's home tonight, what would you do?

When Jesus comes back to rapture the church, it will be sudden and secretive like a thief slipping into a home at night.

If we are not a true believer Jesus will take away some precious people in our lives and we will be left behind.

Jesus said in Matthew 24

'two men will be in a field, one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other left behind.'

Jesus said we must stay prepared for His return because He will come as a thief in the night.

Ask yourself:

1. Am I telling others about Jesus?

If you knew a thief was targeting your neighborhood, you would talk to your neighbors and tell them to take precautions.

Jesus told us He would return like a thief in the night, so we must lovingly warn our neighbors to take precautions and to be prepared for His appearance.

The best thing we can do for our friends, family, and neighbors is to tell them that Jesus is coming back—and we don't know when.

If I knew there was a time bomb set in this room and I didn't know when it would detonate, would it not be my duty to warn you about it and to tell you to take action immediately.

If I knew about it and refused to warn you then I would be guilty of your potentially causing your injury or death.

The same principle applies to warning others about the judgment to come.

Let me read to you from Ezekiel 33.

“I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them a warning. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you will surely die,’ and you do not speak out to warn him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.” (Ezekiel 33:7-9)

Jesus IS going to return and it's our duty to warn them to prepare for it.

Next ask yourself:

2. Could I face the Lord with confidence if He returned TODAY?

Now, we may think all we need to do is to be saved to be ready for the return of Jesus—and that's the most important thing to do.

So, if you are here today and you don't know for sure that you have eternal life, don't leave this place today before you talk to someone about your salvation.

But, most of you are professing Christians and if Jesus returned today could you face Him with confidence?

In speaking to Christians about the return of Christ, John wrote: “

And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.” (1 John 2:28)

John wouldn't write this admonition unless the possibility existed that Jesus could return and find some Christians ashamed.

We would be ashamed if we were hooked on some impure habit when Jesus returned.

If you are abusing your body with alcohol, or drugs, whatever ... how would you react if Jesus returned at the very moment you were lighting up, drinking down, or shooting up?

Or maybe we could be involved in some unholy activity.

There may be a relationship with someone that we know is improper.

Would we be confident if Jesus came back while we were in the middle of that deed?

When teenagers used to ask me what behavior was acceptable on a date, my reply was, “Don't ever go anywhere or do anything that if Jesus came back at that moment, you'd be embarrassed.”

That's good advice for adults, too.

Perhaps we have some unfinished business.

Maybe the Lord has led you to serve Him, or to speak to someone about Christ, and you keep putting it off.

How would you react if Jesus returned before you had a chance to finish the job He gave you?

If we knew for certain Jesus was returning at noon tomorrow, what would we do differently between now and then?

What sins would we immediately confess and stop doing?

What Christian would we go to and ask their forgiveness so that we could be reconciled with them?

What people would we seek out and tell them about Jesus.

That's the point of what Jesus is teaching here.

Don't wait. Do it today.

Live today as if it was your last day!

Are you looking for Him?

Are you longing for Him?

Are you watching, are you working, are you warning?

Like John can you say, "Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus!"