

I. Read Luke 12:35-48

- A. In verse 35, Jesus uses an allusion that is also used in Matthew 25:1-13. Read and discuss the meaning.

The parable recorded in Matthew is an instruction on *the importance of preparedness*. It is possible that the *oil* for the lamps (of Matthew 25) represents the Holy Spirit. Hence, the five virgins' failure to have *oil* in their lamps may be an allusion to their unregenerate state. In other words, they always put off their consideration of and commitment to Christ, assuming that there would be plenty of time for that in the future. The parable could also be portraying believers who have a lackadaisical attitude toward sanctification, that is, their obedience and commitment to Christ. Thinking that there will be plenty of time to get serious about their faith in the future, they finally run out of time. Regardless of the exact interpretation, the main point is that all should be prepared for Christ's return or their own death, whichever comes first.

- B. In verses 36-38, Jesus continues to explain the importance of preparedness. In verse 35, He refers to *the necessity of being dressed appropriately* ("in readiness" NAS). This reference is to the necessity of girding or tying one's robe around the waist to assure freedom of movement. What is the point?

The idea is to be *ready to serve* — not just remaining passive and docile. The servant who is prepared for his master's return is *ready to serve Him!*

In verse 37, those who are ready to serve their master will actually *be served by him*. What does this mean?

First, it is an allusion to the abundant life and extraordinary provision God makes for those committed to serve Him. In a very real sense, serving God becomes its own reward. Only those who have experienced this can truly understand it. Second, the description of the master serving the servant is a reference to future rewards for service rendered. After Christ's return, He will serve as host at a great banquet which will initiate His perfect kingdom.

- C. What is the meaning of the referral to *second and third watch* in verse 38?

The Jews divided the night into three *watches*. Once again, the point is preparedness. Even if the servant or slave must wait throughout the whole night for the master's return, it will be worth it.

- D. In verse 39-40, Jesus uses an important metaphor to help us understand the time He will return. In the context of his explanation in verses 39 & 40, He does not refer to the *manner* of His return but to the unexpected *time* of His return. What is the difference?

Some use the metaphor of a thief in the night to support the erroneous belief in a *secret* return or second coming. Their notion is that thieves break in stealthily with no sound. This is the position of dispensational pre-millennialists who believe in a pre-tribulational, secret rapture of the church. However, Jesus is obviously not pointing to the *manner* of the break-in, but rather to the fact that *thieves come when you least expect them*. If you knew you were going to be robbed, you would be waiting for the thief. "If the head of the house had known *at what hour* (the *time*, not the *manner*) the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his home to be broken into."

- E. In verse 40, Jesus makes something very clear. What is it?
No matter how the “signs” of His second coming appear, we will not be able to know for sure when Christ will return. It may be today, or it may be in 1,000 years.

What error do many evangelicals make in this regard?

They try to predict the time of Christ’s second coming. Many make elaborate charts and write books trying to prove their case. This is all foolishness! Folks who spend time and money reading this kind of junk have missed the whole point of Jesus’ teaching. It doesn’t really matter when He returns if we are always ready and involved in serving Him. It is not the obedient servant that worries about his master’s return. It is the disobedient servant.

How should you respond when a teacher begins to set dates for Christ’s return?

You should not waste your time listening to him. The fact that he has misunderstood such a simple teaching probably means that he has misunderstood a whole lot of other things as well. I would cross him or her *off my list of teachers to listen to!*

- F. In verse 41, Peter asks an important question. Is this exhortation only for us (the disciples) or should others listen as well? By Christ’s response in verses 42-48, what do *you* think?
It is for *all* who have the capacity and willingness to listen. It is for *all* who want to hear the truth. It is for *all* who know that Jesus is *the truth* (“the way, the truth, and the life”).
- G. In verses 45-48, Jesus is introducing an important principle, which He explains further in Matthew 25:14-30. Explain and discuss.
The principle is simple. One who faithfully handles small responsibilities will faithfully handle large ones. One who is unfaithful in small things will be unfaithful in greater things. God entrusts greater responsibilities and blesses faithful servants. Unfaithful servants suffer loss — the loss of rewards, of blessings, of the privilege of serving, etc.