Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Waiting for the Master's Return, Part 2
Scripture: Luke 12:35-40
Code: 42-176

2004

We find ourselves now in the twelfth chapter, looking at the teaching of Jesus in verses 35 through 40...Luke 12, verses 35 through 40. Let me read it to you.

"Be dressed in readiness and keep your lamps alight and be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will gird himself to serve and have them recline at the table and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch or even in the third and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

And here we are introduced in this passage to the return of Jesus Christ. The Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah is coming back to earth at an unexpected moment. This glorious finale of history has been anticipated by believers in all generations since it was first promised by the Lord Himself. When He spoke these words and many others like them, He told us that history was linear, not cyclical. There are certainly cycles in history because of the sinfulness of man, but history itself is linear and it moves inexorably to its final destination, already determined by God Himself and the final glorious reality of history is the return of Jesus Christ.

We are told in the Scripture that it's going to happen at a time we don't expect and a time we don't know. We are also told that we are to be ready, every generation is to be ready. This is a reminder that what our Lord is talking about here is something that is a signless event. That is to say there is no way to predict it. There is no way to anticipate it. People will often ask me, "Do you think the Lord is coming soon?" And I will say, "Sooner than ever, but that's the best I can do."

"Do you think He's coming this year?" "Do you think He's coming in the next five years?" I will tell you this, He is coming at an hour we don't expect. He could come at any time, we all are always to be ready with every generation for two thousand years since Jesus first said this, we have all lived in the imminent reality of an event that has no precursors, that has no signs.

Now, when the Lord comes there are a number of things that will take place. This imminent reality of His return at an hour we do not know and do not expect launches a sequence of events that bring the universe and the world to the end of its current condition. Let me just give you a little bit of an overview of that.

When the Lord comes there will be the destruction of the universe. This universe, this time/space universe made up of atomic structure will be destroyed. It will literally melt with fervent heat. That is, there will be a universe-sized atomic disintegration. God will absolutely uncreate the universe and as we know it, it goes out of existence. It is temporary, the planet is temporary, the solar system is temporary, the stellar heavens are temporary, everything we know in the created universe is temporary. In its place, the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament says God will create a new heaven and a new earth characterized by infinite and eternal righteous perfection, a universe, a new heaven and a new earth, with no sin forever.

Before that happens, however, there will be a final judgment of the ungodly on this earth and in this universe environment. However, this judgment will be a judgment in which sinners will not survive. It is called The Great White Throne Judgment and it is detailed for us in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. And it just precedes the destruction of the universe and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth. So the final event of the coming of Christ is to create a new universe, just prior to that is the judgment of all the ungodly who, by the way, will come before God and be given bodies, resurrection bodies...the ungodly are now in a place of torment, separated from God. They will be brought before a tribunal. They will be given bodies fit for the Lake of Fire where they will be sent forever. The godly already enjoying the presence of God will then be ushered into the new heaven and the new earth as their final home. Prior to the Great White Throne, before that, there will be a one-thousand year millennial kingdom in which the Lord Jesus Christ reigns from Jerusalem on this earth in this universe. So finally there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

Before that there will be a Great White Throne Judgment at which all the ungodly will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire, all the godly go into the new heaven and the new earth, all those who belong to God. Prior to that is the one thousand year Kingdom of Christ where He reigns on earth, described very clearly in the first part of Revelation chapter 20. And in that Kingdom, the world will be changed. Paradise will be regained. It will be a worldwide Eden. The desert will blossom like a rose. The creation will be altered dramatically. Its final form before it goes out of existence, it will still be touched by sin, it will still be impacted by sin but it will be Eden recreated. Lion will lie down with a lamb, children can play with poisonous snakes because there will no longer be poison that kills. Life will be so long that it says in the Bible if you die at a hundred years, you die a baby. Peace will dominate the earth. Christ will rule with a rod of iron. We will rule with Him in His glorious Kingdom. He will rule in Jerusalem because it's the Kingdom that was promised to Israel. Israel will go into that Kingdom a saved remnant of Israel to receive the promises that God made to them. That's the thousand-year

Kingdom.

Prior to that, or before that Kingdom, Christ comes in judgment. And this is what we commonly call the Second Coming specifically although it really encompasses a lot more, this is His coming in judgment, Revelation 19, as He rides a white horse, blood spattered, comes and destroys the ungodly at the final moment of the battle of Armageddon. He also destroys the ungodly worldwide and only those who have come to faith in Him go into that Kingdom in their physical form. They have children. They live a long time. Children are multiplied during that thousand years. The whole earth is populated with the offspring of believers who have gone into the Kingdom, but not all of those offspring will believe in the Messiah, even though He's here physically, literally, visibly in Jerusalem ruling. There will be many rejecting Him. They will have a rebellion at the end of the thousand years which the Lord Himself will then end. And they will be brought, along with all the other ungodly, to the Great White Throne and sentenced to the Lake of Fire.

So the final is the new heaven and the new earth, preceded by the Great White Throne, preceded by the thousand-year Kingdom. The thousand-year Kingdom is launched and inaugurated when Christ comes in judgment to end the battle of Armageddon, to destroy the ungodly all over the world. Before that there is a period the Bible calls a time of Tribulation. It is laid out for us as the seventieth week of Daniel, a seven-year period. Half of it is three and a half years, half of it is twelve hundred and sixty days, half of it is 42 months, the scriptures say. It's a seven-year period. It's a seven-year period of devastating divine judgment. It's a seven-year period of divine wrath leading up to the return of Christ which is the full-blown day of the Lord promised both in the Old and the New Testament. During that period of Tribulation, God's judgment will fall on the earth. And it's described in the book of Revelation as a series of seals that are opened. And every time a seal is opened, another judgment comes, and another seal and another judgment. There are seven seals and out of the seventh seal come seven trumpets and each of them is a judgment. And out of the seventh trumpet comes seven bowls and each of them is a judgment. So you have, first of all, the seals being opened and then the seventh seal and the speed of the judgments is faster and then the seventh trumpet and the speed of the vial or bowl judgments is even faster still. And all that judgment unfolds in those seven years.

Now all of that is part of the Lord's coming. He comes in judgment. He comes to destroy the wicked. He comes to set up His Kingdom. He comes to stop the rebellion that's occurred in His Kingdom. He comes to face sinners at the Great White Throne. And, of course, then He enters in to the creation of the new heaven and the new earth where all the righteous will dwell forever and He casts the wicked into the Lake of Fire. Before that, however, before the Tribulation, there is one other event. There's a trigger event that sets this all in motion and it is the catching away of the church, the redeemed church, the snatching away of believers in Jesus Christ from all over the world. We call it the Rapture and we...we say the word "rapture" and we think of listening to music and saying, "I was enraptured by the music." Well what you mean by that metaphorically is, I was lifted up, I was caught away. And that's what the word essentially is conveying. The church will be snatched away and then comes the

Tribulation and all that horrific judgment on the earth. And by the way, while that's going on, Israel will at that time recognize their Messiah, repent and believe and then be brought into their Kingdom. The Tribulation occurs in which the world is judged and Israel comes to faith. Then Christ comes, sets up His Kingdom, stops the rebellion at the end of the Kingdom, brings sinners to the Great White Throne and then comes the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth and the eternal Lake of Fire for the ungodly and Satan and his angels. But the event that triggers it all is the snatching away of the church. That's the signless event. All these passages that say, "In an hour you don't know...In an hour you don't expect...Be ready...Be ready...Be ready...Be ready," indicate that there are no signs for that. That's why we believe that this signless event has to happen before any of the other things because once the first seal is opened, we know what's coming...the second seal, then the third, then the fourth. Once the first horse or the white horse comes, then we know what's coming next. Once the third seal, we know it's the fourth. Once the fourth, it's the fifth. Then we know the day of the Lord is going to explode, the abomination of desolations, the temple is going to be desecrated and then all hell is going to break loose all over this planet. Hell is going to belch out demons that are set loose on the earth, God's going to pour down judgment. The sky is going to roll up. The stars are going to fall. The earth is going to be changed. The waters of the earth are going to be turned bitter. A third of the population is going to die. A fourth of the population that remains is going to die. There's going to be a massive holocaust. And we know the sequence, seven seals out of the seventh seal seven trumpets, out of the seventh trumpet seven bowls...we can follow the pattern. We know then that Armageddon is going to start and the army of the east is going to come and the great work of Satan to gather the armies of the world to fight against Christ and he comes and all of that is laid out. Then comes the Kingdom. The Kingdom goes for a thousand years. The rebellion is quelled, etc.

So once you get into the Tribulation, there's a sequence of events that are laid out very clearly in the Scripture. But there is one event that we do not know when it's going to happen, there are no signs, there are no precursors to it and it is this event of the snatching away of the church that is the trigger event that starts everything. And every generation of believers since Jesus first promised this have lived in the light of this and we don't know when it's going to happen. And that's what our Lord is talking about in verse 40. "You too be ready for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." You have no idea when this begins. You need to be ready. The first event in His coming is when He comes for His saints. And then seven years later, with them to set up His Kingdom. The first one we call the snatching away or the Rapture.

Let me show you three passages of Scripture that lay this out. John 14...John 14:1 through 3 and I'll make a couple of comments about it. Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled." I'm going to tell you some news that should quiet you and calm you and comfort you. I'm going to give you some good news, okay? The good news is this, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places, many rooms, talking about heaven, and if it were not so, I would have told you." I'm telling you the absolute truth, I am going to leave, Jesus is telling them He's leaving. I'm going to go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I

am, there you may be also.

Jesus is saying I want to comfort you. I want to take away the anxiety and the trouble of your heart. I'm going away but I'm coming back and I'm coming back to gather you and take you to the place I'm preparing for you.

Now turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and we'll build on that a little bit. First Corinthians chapter 15 verse 51, here is a further description of this event...a further description of this same event. Verse 51, 1 Corinthians 15, "Behold, I tell you a mystery," not an Agatha Christie mystery, not something that's complicated and hard to figure out, mystery in the Bible means something hidden now revealed. It's another way of saying, "Behold, I'm going to tell you something you've never known, I'm going to tell you something that's never before been revealed. I'm going to tell you something God has kept hidden until now, and here it is...we're not all going to die." Wow...we're not all going to die? No, we're not all going to die. Sleep meaning death, we're not all going to sleep, we're not all going to die, but we all are going to be changed. This is something brand new, we're not all going to die...but we're all going to be changed. Some of us aren't going to die, but we're going to be transformed? Yes. Verse 52, "In a moment, in a nanosecond at the last trump the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable. All the believers who have died in a nanosecond, God is going to blow a trumpet and all the dead believers are going to be raised imperishable. You say, "Well aren't they already in heaven?" Sure they're spirits are in heaven but their bodies are still in the grave. And at that moment, God is going to bring bodies to join their spirits. All the saints who have died in the past are waiting their resurrection bodies, the body like Christ's own resurrection body as Philippians 3:20 and 21 says. So at that moment, in that nanosecond, out of nowhere the Lord comes to take us and the first thing that happens is the believers' bodies obviously new bodies, the others would have been disintegrated, come up and join their redeemed spirits and we...verse 52...the ones that are still alive are transformed instantly from earthly to heavenly. It's as if we have our own resurrection then. And the perishable puts on the imperishable and the mortal puts on immortality. And verse 54 says, the end of the verse, "Death is swallowed up in victory." So Paul is saying we're waiting for this event when the Lord comes to take His own to the place He's prepared. And in order to live in heaven in the place He's prepared, we're going to have to be suited for heaven and so the Lord's going to come and transform us. First of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, the glorified saints who now are in heaven in their spirits are going to receive bodies, and then we who are still alive are just going to be transformed on the way up. And we all become imperishable, we all become immortal.

One other passage, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 fills out our understanding of this event. First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 16, here's the same event. "The Lord Himself will descend," that's right, John 14 said He would come. "And with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God," Paul talked about that trumpet also in 1 Corinthians 15, "In that event, the Lord Himself comes down with a shout, the voice of the archangel, the trumpet is blown and the dead in Christ rise first." That's what we saw in 1 Corinthians 15. Somebody said that's because they have six feet further to

go, but there's more to it than that. Some of them are buried on shelves, as you well know, in piles of ashes and etc., etc. The issue is, the dead who have been asleep, as it were, their bodies, they've been waiting for their glorified bodies. The first thing that's going to happen is those glorified bodies are going to come and join those glorified spirits and they will then enter their eternal form like the resurrected Christ. And then verse 17, "We who are alive," the rest of us believers and still remaining on earth, "are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and this we always will be with the Lord." We go up to the place He's prepared for us. This is the signless event called the Rapture of the church. And verse 17 says, "Comfort one another with these words." John 14 said, "Stop being anxious, don't worry, I'm going to give you good news." And what you need to understand about this is these three passages, John 14, 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, talk about Christ coming for His own with no reference to judgment. In each of these cases it's comforting, it's encouraging, it removes something that troubles. This is not a judgment event. None of the language refers to judgment.

On the other hand, every text that looks at the day of the Lord talks about judgment. So this is a non-judgment event. It is also a signless event which is very important. How can the Lord say you don't know when, you don't know when, you don't know when, you don't know when to expect, it could be any time. Unless it's an event that could happen at any moment and there are no signs and if there are no signs then it can't be something in the middle of a sequence of seals and a sequence of trumpets and a sequence of bowls ‘cause there are plenty of signs. This is a special event, we're taken to heaven. What for? Well, two things are going to happen. Revelation 22:12 says, "Behold, I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give to every man according his works shall be." The first thing that happens, we go to heaven and we receive our reward, we receive our eternal reward. It's often called the Bema judgment of Christ. Not a judgment of our sins, they were judged on the cross, but a time of reward. The wood, hay and stubble of our life disappears and for whatever in our lives energized by the Holy Spirit and for the glory of Christ was gold, silver and precious stones becomes the basis of our reward, not just what we do but the motives and secrets of our hearts will be evaluated and we'll be rewarded on the basis of that. We all stand before that wonderful judgment seat to receive a reward for the things that we've done for the Lord. And we're depicted in the fourth chapter of Revelation as having crowns and so it's a time of reward. There all the church, the glorified church will be in resurrection bodies and the second even that's going to happen is the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. We're going to see our bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ and Revelation 19 describes a great marriage feast. We're going to sit at the table with our bridegroom and this is a glorious image that's carried through much of the teaching of our Lord Jesus. He talked so often about He was going to bring you into the glory of His Kingdom and sit down at the table and recline with you and eat with you and drink with you, and really pictures the marriage supper which begins in heaven and then, you know, marriage suppers lasted a long time, it begins in heaven during the time of the Tribulation and then it seems to come down into earth. In fact, it becomes an eternal marriage supper, an eternal celebration. And when we're caught up, then all hell breaks loose on earth in the devastation of the time of Tribulation.

The time of Tribulation on earth is described in Revelation 6 through 19, just laid out in sequence. By the way, there's no mention of the church in Revelation 6 through 19, twenty times the church is mentioned in Revelation 1, 2 and 3. And I think you see the church in heaven in Revelation 4 and 5 because of the twenty-four elders that are in heaven and I think the 24 elders depict the church. They wear gold crowns and that's said of the church in Revelation 2:10. They sing the song of the redeemed. They are called kings and priests, that's true of the church. Never said of angels. Furthermore, the church is not to be in the Tribulation, according to Revelation 3:10 and Revelation 3:10 the promise of the Lord is, "I will keep you from the hour of tribulation." I will keep you from the hour of tribulation which is about to come upon the whole world, tereo ek, I will take you out from. During the time of the Tribulation, Revelation 6 to 19, Jews are mentioned, Gentiles are mentioned, the church is not mentioned.

So, we...according to Titus 2:13...are looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We're not looking for the Antichrist, and we're not looking for the Tribulation, we're looking for Christ. We're waiting for Him to come back ‘cause He said, "I'm going to come and you don't know when I'm going to come and I'm going to come and take you out to the place that I've prepared for you and I'm going to reward you and I'm going to have you sit down at My table and we're going to have the marriage feast." That's why I think the best understanding is the understanding that is indicated in very simple language in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 where it says of the church, "You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven...to wait for His Son from heaven."

We're looking for Christ, not Antichrist. We're waiting.

You say, "Ah, my goodness, we've been waiting a long time...two thousand years." But remember last time we said this, 2 Peter 3, "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day." It might be long on your calendar, it's short on His.

So the church then is waiting for the Son from heaven, waiting for the Lord to come and take them there. And then we're there during the Tribulation and then when He comes back, Revelation 19 says, we come with Him...He comes with His saints. And we come down in our glorified form and we reign with Him on the earth. And then we enter in to the eternal state with Him in the new heaven and the new earth.

So the trigger event is the key I want you to get. Go back now to Luke 12. The trigger event is the signless event that we call the Rapture of the church. And so when Jesus says the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect, that's obvious because there is nothing before the Rapture. That's why we say it's imminent. It's the next event, that's what imminent means. And, you know, that's essentially what the Scripture says. All the writers of the New Testament understood this.

James said, "Be patient, brethren, to the coming of the Lord." Be patient, the Lord is...the coming of the Lord is near, soon, at hand. Peter said the same thing, 1 Peter 4:7, "The coming of the Lord is at hand." The writer of Hebrews says, "The day is approaching." John...1 John 2:18 and 28, "It is the last time, It is the last hour." Revelation 1:1, that's as direct as it can be. The writer of Revelation, John, starts out, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show to His bondservants the things wish much...the things which must shortly take place." All believers since Jesus promised that He was coming and we didn't know when have lived in the light of the reality that it could happen at any moment. And so, we need to be ready because after that comes judgment on this world. And there will be a horrific judgment described in the book of Revelation, devastating judgment in which people will be catapulted into eternal night. You need to be ready to be taken away.

You say, "Well wait a minute, if you go into that Tribulation and you're not raptured with the church, can you still believe and be saved?" Yes, there will be a great preaching of the gospel during that seven years. There will be a great harvest of souls during that seven years. This is true. People have their lifetime. And if their lifetime extends into that period, they have their lifetime. But it will be a world dominated by Antichrist and it will be a world engulfed in horrific divine judgment. How much better to be gathered to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, to be gathered to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Be ready, the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Now, that's the point. The Lord gives four analogies of readiness, okay? Four analogies of readiness. Now we'll go back and look at verses 35 to 39 and it will all just unfold pretty simply. Four analogies of readiness...number one, verse 35, first half of the verse, "Be dressed in readiness." Literally, let your loins be girded...let your loins be girded. Everybody wore dresses in those days, everybody wore wrong...long robes. They had a couple of holes for the arms and a hole for the head and you just threw on this robe. You've seen all the pictures and film depictions of life in this period and it's true. They all wore these flowing robes. If you were going to go into action, that was a very, very inconvenient way to be dressed and so what they would typically do would be take a sash or some kind of belt and pull it around their waist and pull all of that loose material together. And very often they would take the corners of their robes, pull them up through so that they would shorten them up so that they could move with more facility and more alacrity. It was very important. This goes even back to the Exodus, back in Exodus chapter 12 verse 11, the angel of death was going to come and it was moving time. After four centuries in Egypt, they were going. Israel was going out of Egypt. God was going to deliver them. And you remember what He said? "You eat the Passover but you eat the Passover fast and you eat the Passover with your loins girded and your sandals on, we're moving out."

What is He saying? He's saying you've got to be ready to be going. It's going to happen so fast, it's going to happen in a nanosecond, you don't know when it's going to happen, you better be ready to move. The New Testament adds to that, there are a number of Old Testament uses of that phrase, 1 Kings 18:46, 2 Kings 4:29, it was a very familiar Jewish metaphor for readiness. It also worked in the

Roman world. Paul said that a Roman soldier when he was talking about the armor of the Christian had on a belt of sincerity or truthfulness, the belt of truth, and what he was saying by that is...Look, if you're going to engage in spiritual war, you've...you've got to pull the loose ends of your life together. First Peter 1:13, "Gird up your minds for action. Pull in the loose ends of your life." It's a metaphor for spiritual readiness, call to action to be ready to move and move fast.

Second metaphor is lamps. The first one is clothing, the second one is lamp...lamps. "Keep your lamps alight, or keep your lamps lit." This is not time to be meandering around in the darkness. This is no time to be fumbling and stumbling. Be alert, be aware, be watchful, have everything ready. You remember the story in Matthew chapter 25, the parable that Jesus told about the ten virgins. The ten virgins, you know, were the bridesmaid to the bride and they were supposed to be ready for whenever the bridegroom came. Weddings were really very hard to nail down in terms of time. They started when they started and they ended when they ended. You know, they started when everything was done and the preparations were made and the food was fixed and they ended when they ran out. And so they were sort of floating as to their beginning and their end. And in the case of Matthew 25, they were waiting and waiting for the bridegroom to come and He didn't come and He didn't come and it got to be night and dark and, of course, now it's midnight and some of them let their lamps go out. They weren't ready when He came. That's a metaphor of lack of preparation. The bridegroom came, the wedding took place, the door was slammed in the faces of the virgins who had no oil and Jesus is saying by that story, "You don't know when the bridegroom is coming and you better be ready or you're going to be on the outside. And outside is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Be ready when He comes. You don't know when He's coming."

Paul put it this way in Romans 13, "Do this knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." Wake up. "Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." He's saying that two thousand years ago. "Let us cast off the works of darkness. Let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lust. It's time to come to Christ. It's time to live godly lives." Jesus is coming, could come at any moment. You need to be alert, have the light on and not be in spiritual darkness.

Third picture, third metaphor is of servants...clothing, lamps and servants. Verse 36, "And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will gird himself to serve and have them recline at the table and will come up and wait on them whether he comes in the second watch or even in the third and finds them so, blessed are those slaves."

That's just a very, very familiar picture to them. And as I said earlier, a wedding feast was something that just sort of happened in a general sense at a general time rather than saying, you know, we're

going to have a wedding, it's going to be Saturday at eight o'clock. They would say you're all invited to a wedding. They would send out wedding invitations and it would say, like, "In the month of April and we'll let you know when it starts." And by the way, they would last, as I said, up to seven days or even more, depending on how wealthy they were, how many people came and how much food there was available. They weren't sure exactly when it would begin because all of the accumulation of the food and all that needed to be done was somewhat undetermined. And so here's a perfect illustration. A master goes to a wedding. And he has to tell his people, "I...I don't know when I'll be back," because that's how weddings were. "So I'm just going to put you in charge of everything." Now they could take it seriously or not so seriously. And so he says here, "Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes." And so in verse 36 he's saying, "You need to be like that, you need to be like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast which carries the idea of you don't know when it's going to be, so that he may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. You've just got to be there waiting so that when he arrives and puts one hand on that door, that door is open and you're ready to receive him and give a full account of everything.

Now they knew that a master would bless servants like that. "Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes. Truly I say to you, he will gird himself to serve and have them recline at the table and come up and wait on them." Isn't that amazing? That's turning the proverbial tables. When he comes home and he finds you ready, everything is ready, everything is as you know he would want it to be, you are prepared for his arrival. He is going to be so thrilled and so thankful for that that he is going to say, "Folks, sit down, I'll cook dinner. I'll feed you. You are now my honored guests." And by the way, verse 38, "Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third and finds them, so blessed are those slaves."

Wow, they knew that. The Romans had divided the night military watch into four parts, six to nine, nine to twelve, twelve to three, three to six. The Jews divided into three parts, scholars like to debate whether Jesus was thinking of a Jewish watch or a Roman watch and really, who cares? It's not a critical point. Who knows what Jesus was thinking, we only know what He said, and He didn't say either. The point is this, the second or the third watch would be late. In a Roman setting, it would be between nine and three A.M. and in a Jewish setting it would span basically the same amount of time. So you're talking about a very inconvenient time when people would normally be asleep and they had finished their day of work and he said, "But you know what? If you're ready in that most unexpected time, if you're ready even if he comes in the third watch of the night, even if he comes in the dark when you should be asleep, and you're ready, He is going to light everything, He's going to set a table, He's going to sit you down and He's going to feed you." And there's another picture of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb at which the bridegroom Himself will serve His bride. When He comes and takes us to heaven, He will sit us at His table and He will serve us. That's one of the great pictures of the love of Christ for His redeemed church. I understand the part that we serve Him. This is over the top, that He serves us. When He comes back and finds us faithful, He will serve us.

You know, this was..this was often in Jesus' teaching. In Matthew 24 He taught very similar truth. Listen to verse 44, Matthew 24, "For this reason, you be ready too for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom His master put in charge of His household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when He comes. Truly I say to you, He'll put him in charge of all His possessions." It's the same idea. When a master comes and you've been waiting and you're ready for His coming and you have fulfilled His will and done everything you know He wants you to do, He will put you in charge of all His possessions. This is another way of saying, He not only will serve you, He not only will give the feast in your honor, He will give you His Kingdom. But on the other hand, the evil slave who said, "My master is not coming for a long time," and goes out and beats his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day when he doesn't expect him and an hour he doesn't know and cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, weeping shall be there and gnashing of teeth. Better be ready when that moment comes.

And even in Matthew 25 Jesus deals with the parable of the talents, doled out responsibility and then rewarded or punished based upon how people responded to that responsibility. You want to be ready, clothing means prepared to move, lamps mean fully in light and not in darkness, servants mean having done what you know is the will of your Master, being prepared for the coming of Christ at an unexpected hour.

In Luke 13:28 to 30, Jesus further describes this great banquet as people coming from the east and the west, the north and the south, reclining at the table in the Kingdom of God. In Luke 22 He talks about it again in verse 27, "Who is greater? The one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves." Isn't that amazing? The one who is served is the honored guest and yet Jesus says I'm going to make you the honored guest. You stood by Me in My trials and just as My Father granted Me a Kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." So that the feast goes right into the Millennial Kingdom where we sit on thrones with Christ and judge Israel. We become the honored guests, caught up, rewarded, sit down at the table, given the Kingdom, He serves us, He makes us judges, brings us back at His return to reign and rule with Him and then takes us after the thousand years is over into His eternal Kingdom.

And one final metaphor here in Luke 12, that of a thief. Clothing, lamps, servants, and a thief, verse 39, "Be sure of this," this is emphatic obvious but emphatic, "that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into," or literally, dug through because houses were made out of mud and the thieves would dig through as verse 33 says, they would steal. And so if a man knew when the thief was coming, he would make sure that no thief could do his dastardly work. A thief's stock-in-trade is surprise, when you don't expect it. I mean no thief is very successful who comes when you expect it. They thrive on coming when you don't

expect it. And this is the picture of the coming of the Lord. He's going to come like a thief, not in that he's going to do damage, not in that he's going to take something he's not entitled to, but it's the element of surprise that is carried in this metaphor. Listen to 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 2, "You yourselves know full well the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night...just like a thief in the night. But you, brethren, are not in darkness that the day should overtake you like a thief, for you are all sons of light and sons of the day." You're ready, you have the lamps on, you have your loins girded and you've rendered your service to your master and you're ready to go. He's coming like a thief.

Peter said the same thing in 2 Peter, using that same metaphor. Once the Lord used it, they all started borrowing it from Him. Second Peter 3:10, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." Revelation, we even have the same thing and here in chapter 16 and verse 15 says, "Behold," this is the Lord talking, "I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake, has the lamp on, keeps his garments," that is is dressed and ready to go. And even back in I think it's the third chapter of Revelation, and verse 3, "Remember therefore what you have received and heard, keep it and repent if therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief and...here it is...and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you." That's the concept of the thief, you don't know when. So be ready.

How do we get ready? How do you get ready? First of all, you need to come to Christ. We can go back to Luke 9, can't we, on that one and it says in verse 23, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me." Come to Christ, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, whoever loses his life for My sake is the one who will save it. What does a man profit it he gains the whole world and forfeits his own soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes." Get ready, He's coming and you don't want Him to be ashamed of you when He comes.

Listen to Luke 21:34, "Be on guard that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life and that day suddenly come upon you like a trap. For it will come on all those who dwell on the face of all the earth, but keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place and to stand before the Son of Man." Be ready to stand before the Son of Man when He comes. This is a call to salvation.

But there's also a call to sanctification...a call to sanctification and Peter gives us that call in 2 Peter 3:14. He says, "Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things...I love this...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless." You want to be ready when He comes, not just because you belong to Him but because you are living a godly life. You're living a holy life. Since we are looking for this coming, what kind of persons should we be? Second Peter 3:11 says, "You are to be holy in your conduct and godly." He's coming...He's coming when we don't expect it. You need to come to Christ and be saved, to be ready when He arrives to be taken to glory and you need to be living a godly life to receive then a full reward when He arrives. Let's pray.

Father, we remember the words of John who said, "He that has this hope, purifies himself." This is a purifying reality, to live in the real anticipation of Your return. Help us, Lord, to understand that purification of salvation and sanctification that is a true and appropriate response to the reality of the return of Christ. We don't know when, it could be today. It could be a long time. We're glad we don't know or we would panic or be irresponsible, be fearful and so we need to live every day as if it might be the day when Jesus comes. May every heart be ready to be received into eternal glory and to be rewarded for a faithful and obedient life. Father, now we ask that You would help us to come to a soul-searching realization that we can't hold very strongly or tightly to the things of this life, that the future we really need to be planning is the future that relates to the return of our Savior. And as Jesus taught earlier in the chapter, our treasure needs to be in heaven because our hearts are there. We do look for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we are ready and eager and say with John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But we know at the same time that bitterness of what is triggered by this inaugural event and the horrific judgment that comes, so we pray that You will be gracious to sinners and grant them the salvation that brings deliverance from judgment. We commit this truth to You and its working to Your Spirit, in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).