

WHEN YOU LEAST EXPECT HIM

Luke 12:35-48

Billy Graham: "An inscription in the dome of the Capitol in Washington which few know about says: *"One far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves."* A visitor saw this inscription and asked the guide what it meant. He said: "I think it refers to the second coming of Christ." When the dome of our Capitol was erected, some God-fearing official ordered that inscription to be etched in the dome of our seat of government, believing that its truth was vital to the concern of our nation."

We don't hear much about that "one far-off divine event" any more!

Those to whom the Lord has entrusted responsibility should fulfill it faithfully in anticipation of His sudden, unannounced return.

ISRAEL'S FORMAL REJECTION OF MESSIAH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS PRESENTED AS JESUS TRAVELS TOWARD JERUSALEM 9:51-19:27

INSTRUCTION IN VIEW OF REJECTION 12:1-19:27

PROPER CONDUCT FOR HIS FOLLOWERS 12:1-48

Conduct which should characterize Jesus' disciples, in light of growing opposition. Jesus identifies proper priorities in view of His coming kingdom.

SURVIVAL IN THE FACE OF AFFLICTION AND REJECTION DEPENDS ON PROPER PERSPECTIVE:

What are we focusing our attention on?

Jesus presents five contrasts:

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

NOT ON:

External appearances

Warning concerning hypocrisy 12:1-3

Those who oppose us

Proper attitude concerning rejection 12:4-12

Material possessions

Proper priority concerning possessions 12:13-21

Physical needs

BUT ON:

Heart attitudes

12:1-2

God who cares

12:4-12

Relationship with God

12:13-21

God who provides

12:22-34

PROPER PRIORITY CONCERNING SERVICE 12:22-48

Final two issues the Lord wants followers to focus on, in the face of growing opposition deal with the proper priority concerning serving Him.

The first deals with serving Him and possessions:

Trust in the Lord's provision 12:22-34

The Lord will take care of His servants.

The second issue related to serving Him: Warning which has distinct implications for the crowd and His disciples. He tells us to,

BE READY FOR THE LORD'S RETURN 12:35-48

Summary: Those to whom the Lord has entrusted a responsibility should dedicate themselves to fulfilling it faithfully in anticipation of His sudden unannounced return

DON'T FOCUS ON PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GAIN

That's what Pharisees, and those who follow them, did.

FOCUS ON THE LORD'S RETURN

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION**NOT ON:****BUT ON:****PERSONAL ADVANTAGE CHRIST'S RETURN 12:35-48****TWO WARNINGS CONCERNING OUR LORD'S RETURN:****1. WARNING FOR THE CROWD****Based on Israel's failure to watch for His coming.****People who are prepared for His return will have the privilege of participating in the kingdom. 35-40****BE READY***-The Lord will return when you least expect Him!***EXAMPLE #1 12:35-38****A servant ready for his master's return with his bride from the wedding feast—a warning to be ready for our Lord's coming.**

The servant should be dressed ready to serve.

The long flowing robes were a hindrance to work.

To prepare for work a person gathered his robes under his girdle to be free for activity.

The servant should have his lamp trimmed and filled with oil.

The lamp was a cotton wick floating in a sauce-boat of oil.

The wick had to be trimmed and the oil replenished or the light would go out.

Our Lord warns us to be ready—to have garments prepared for service and lamps trimmed.

EXAMPLE #2 12:39-40**The head of a house that a thief is about to invade.**

The homeowner needs to be alert because the thief comes when you least expect him.

Our Lord will come when we least expect Him; we should be ready for His coming at any moment – when we least expect Him.

2. WARNING FOR DISCIPLES—to serve Him faithfully while watching for His imminent return. 41-48**EXAMPLE #3 12:42-48****A slave—placed as administrator over the other servants (still servant/administrator himself)**

– Responsible for feeding the others

If he forgets about His return, and starts abusing privileges (takes profit for himself),

*He will come when he least expects it!**"My master will be a long time coming" 45***MM, Apr. 1990 IS THE FUTURE A THING OF THE PAST?**

Why has Biblical prophecy, once a hot topic, become passe during the last two decades?

Recently several prominent leaders have engaged in date-setting and thus damaged the credibility of all prophetic teachers. Many sincere but misguided believers have been disillusioned by these attempts but a more basic reason is that Christians have adopted a perspective that denies the existence of anything beyond the material realm. Thus their lives are lived with no concern for the reality of heaven, hell, the return of Christ, or the millennium. The result is spiritual disorientation in the church.

Just as the prophecies about Christ's first coming seemed irrelevant to many Jews, a large number of evangelicals view the Second Coming as unrelated to their goals and circumstances.

Will the 1990s see a change in this attitude? For the most part, no. It will be business as usual just as in the days of Noah even though a number of documented facts indicate that time is getting short.

Wiersbe: "Once a believer starts to think his Master is *not* coming back, his life begins to deteriorate."

Robert Murray McCheyne sometimes asked, "Do you believe Jesus is coming today?" If they replied in the negative, he would say, "Then you had better be ready, for He is coming at an hour when you think not!"

*Pastoral theses I'm reading indicate He may come today,
for no one seems to think so any more!*

12:46 isn't focusing on loss of salvation.

It's a threat of separation—such a servant is cut off from others and assigned a place among the "unfaithful".

The phrase is still part of the household illustration.

A master doesn't consign household servants to a place for the "unbelieving."

The word can refer to unbelieving people or unfaithful people. The context determines which is meant.

In this case the logical meaning is "unfaithful."

He puts him with the *unfaithful* servants in his household.

Similarly, the previous verb doesn't literally refer to cutting someone in pieces.

It could be used to cut something in two literally.

The verb is the basis for our word "dichotomy."

A dichotomy is a division into two parts.

Or, it could refer to a classification of things in two groups.

A master could separate his servants into two categories: the faithful and the unfaithful.

So the unfaithful administrator is reassigned; he is classified as unfaithful and placed together with other unfaithful servants.

He loses his position of responsibility.

Do you want a place with the faithful servants in our Lord's house,

or a place with the unfaithful? – THEN BE READY!

Our Lord will separate faithful followers from unfaithful; He'll reward the faithful, but unfaithful lose their rewards (**1 Cor. 3:13-15**).

God's judgment is fair.

It's based on what we receive from Him.

The more we've received from God,

the greater our accountability will be before Him.

God's evaluation of Jesus' followers is based on light received, resources given, and responsibility assigned.

***If you knew Jesus would come in 30 days,
what would you do to get ready?***

***If you think "it's been 2000 years, not likely He'll come this week," what
difference will this attitude produce?***

How does that attitude relate to what Jesus said would happen before His return?

Does that concern you at all? Why? Why not?

John tells us: *"Those who have this hope **purify themselves**"!*

What difference does the possibility that Jesus might suddenly appear today make in OUR life?

Some one approached **St. Francis of Assisi** while he was hoeing his garden, and asked him what he would do if he knew that Jesus was going to come today. He responded that he would go on hoeing his garden. The issue is that whatever we're doing, we should be doing it as for the Lord, with the expectancy that when He comes He will find us doing exactly what He would have us do for His glory. That's the way we should make every daily decision; as if He might come while we are doing it! *[FOR INDEED HE MIGHT!]*

The issue of **PROPER PERSPECTIVE**—Look again at the two lists—

Faced with affliction and rejection, survival depends on proper perspective:

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION

NOT ON:

External appearances

The opposition

Material possessions

Physical needs

Personal advantage

BUT ON:

Heart attitudes 12:1-2

God who cares 12:4-12

Relationship with God 12:13-21

God who provides 12:22-34

Christ's return 12:35-48

Negative—

What do you observe?

Self-centered—focused on possessions—power—prestige—

Represents the world's view

Positive—

What do you observe?

God-centered—Call our attention to Him and our relationship to Him

Satan tries to direct our attention to the "negative" issues.

He wants to distract us from God's perspective

Survival depends on proper perspective

—keeping our eyes focused on the light

On looking to Jesus

ON LOOKING FOR JESUS

Christ's return can be viewed in two ways. **A.B. Simpson**: "There is a looking FOR it and a looking AT it. We may regard it with a keen intellectual interest and yet have it mean nothing to us personally. On the other hand, we may know little about the theology involved in the subject and still enjoy a deep longing for the Lord's appearing. **When a wedding occurs, the public looks AT it, but the bride has been looking FOR it.**

A traveler in Switzerland discovered a beautiful, secluded estate on a tranquil lake. Knocking at the gate, he was met by an aged caretaker who asked him in. The guardian seemed glad to see another person and showed him the garden. "How long have you been here?" the tourist asked. "A very long time," he replied. "And how often has your master returned?" "Four times." "When was he here last?" "Many years ago. I am almost always alone—it's very seldom that even a stranger visits me."

"Yet, you have the garden in such perfect order, and everything is flourishing as if you were expecting your master tomorrow." "No sir," exclaimed the caretaker, **"I have it fixed as if he were coming today!"**

An unknown poet has written,
"What would He find, should He come just now?
A faded leaf or a fruitless bough?
A servant sleeping, an idle plow?
What would He find should He come just now?

What would He find should He come tonight?
Your garment soiled or a spotless white?
Your lamps all burning or with no light?
What would He find should He come tonight?"

**ARE WE WATCHING FOR HIM?
IF HE COMES TODAY, ARE WE READY FOR HIM?**