

New Year's Eve – 2022

Saturday, 12/31 at 4:00

Tonight! 2023!

Are
You
Ready?



Text: Luke 12:35-40 NAS 1995

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: The final Bethlehem sermon of 2022 is based on a section of **Luke chapter 12**. Earlier in the chapter, *with an audience of thousands*, Jesus spoke to the large crowd, then to His disciples:

- ✓ Pharisees are Actors – *religious on the outside, but evil on the inside.*
- ✓ Fear God (can send to hell), *NOT people* (only death).
- ✓ Do NOT be greedy – *our lives do not consist in what we have.*
- ✓ Do NOT worry –
 - *Since God has given us lives, He will give us food.*
 - *Since God has given us bodies, He will give us clothes.*

We now come to Jesus' instruction to His disciples on the importance of always being ready for His return.

1. **Ready Clothes and Lamps:** ³⁵ **“Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit.”**
 - a. Clothes: The people of Jesus’ time wore long robes that fit loosely, but when they were ♦working or ♦about to work, *they would tighten a belt at the waist*. That is being **“dressed in readiness”** – *ready to work in an instant!*
 - b. Lamps: Today, *in the evening*, when we turn off the lights, we are getting ready for sleep. So, to **“keep your lamps lit”** – was Jesus’ way of saying: *Keep being ready; don’t go to sleep spiritually!*

2. **Ready to Open Immediately:** ³⁶ **“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.”**
 - a. Have you ever yelled to someone at your door: “Just give me a minute!” If yes, *you were NOT ready*.
 - b. Let’s understand what Jesus was saying: He was telling His disciples about ♦His ascension to the Father and ♦His return at the end of the world.
 - c. Readiness is vital: When Jesus arrives, *time will expire!* There won’t be a moment to put away our sin and repent. Therefore, it is essential to live in repentance, *in readiness – so that we can immediately open the door!*

3. **A Completely Unexpected Twist:** ³⁷ **“Blessed are those slaves whom the master will 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.”** // *Did you catch that!* It’s NOT that the slaves will serve the master, **BUT the master will serve the slaves!** That is pointing to 😊our glorious eternity as Christians and 😊the amazing surprises God has in store for those who †know Jesus now and †continue in repentance.
4. **The Ready will be Blessed:** ³⁸ **“Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds *them so* [that is, *READY*], **blessed are those slaves.**”** // The second watch is 9 PM to midnight, the third watch is midnight to 3 AM. Those are times when it’s easy to get weary and become unprepared. So, Jesus gives encouragement *by mentioning the blessedness of those who are ready when He comes!*
5. **Unexpected Requires Always:** ³⁹ **“But 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. ⁴⁰ You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”** // Life could be so different if we knew some things in advance: Like tomorrow’s lottery numbers, or this Sunday’s football scores, or exactly when Jesus will return, **BUT WE JUST DON’T KNOW.** So, what is our only viable option? **ALWAYS BE READY! How?**
- With the Bible – keep reading and thinking!
 - With sin – keep being sorry and turning from it!

- c. With divine service – *keep attending!*
- d. With Jesus – *keep trusting!*
- e. With others – *keep loving, forgiving, helping!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Lord Jesus! Since we know that true readiness for Your glorious return is essential, we humbly ask You to ▶protect us from the forces of evil, ▶keep us in true repentance, and ▶use us to be an eternal blessing to others, so that whether You come tonight, next year, or whenever, *we and many others will immediately open the door for You!*

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