

THE FAITHFUL ARE WATCHFUL

– *MARCH 8.* – *LUKE 12:35-48.* –

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." – V.37.

TODAY'S lesson continues the Master's exhortations to His faithful ones – that they prepare themselves for His "Well done!" and the participation with Him in His Kingdom. He had said, "Fear not, Little Flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." (V.32.) The Lord purposely left His followers without definite information respecting the time for the establishment of His Kingdom. He had illustrated the interim of time between His going and returning in the Parable of the Talents. He as the Master had left His servants in charge of His goods while He went to a far country, even Heaven itself, to be invested with the Kingdom authority; and at an appropriate time He would return to receive His servants, and according to their faithfulness would make them sharers with Him in His Kingdom, and then would begin His rule over His subjects, for their blessing and uplift out of sin and death conditions – for their deliverance from the reign of Sin and Death.

REGARDING THE LORD'S SECOND PRESENCE

Today's lesson opens with a parable. If in a great house, the master were about to be married and to bring home his bride, the servants would on that particular night be especially active, wakeful, attentive, that they might receive their lord with proper attention. They would not know exactly the time of their master's coming; but they would be continually on the alert that they might hear his knock and open instantly. So Jesus declared all of His followers should be on the alert for His Second Coming. It was not that He would bring His Bride with Him, rather He comes that He

may receive His Bride here. Indeed, the faithful servants are then to be made the Bride, according to the other picture.

The thought is that Jesus' followers should take their ideals of alertness from the extremest experience of earthly service. Jesus intimated that His followers might be looking for Him sooner than He would come, saying that if He shall come in the second watch or in the third watch or whenever, blessed are those servants if he finds them watching for Him, alert, ready to receive Him. He declared that He will grant such servants a special honor. He will gird Himself, make Himself their servant, and cause them to sit down to a sumptuous feast which He will provide.

This Bible students understand to signify that at the Parousia of Jesus, His Second Presence, He will first of all make Himself known to His faithful followers, while the world in general will be ignorant of the fact that He has come. His manifestation to the world will come later; as we read, "He shall be revealed in flaming fire" – judgments. When He shall appear [to the world], we [the Church] shall appear with Him in glory. – Colossians 3:4.

It is our Lord's Parousia that is described in today's lesson – His earliest manifestations of His Second Advent. The world will see Him not, and know not of His presence, and His Church will know of His presence only by His "knock" – by the intimations given in the Scriptures – the fulfilment of prophecy. It will then be for the watchful ones to recognize this fulfilment, and by faith to open their hearts and minds promptly to acknowledge the Master's presence and all that Presence implies of the nearness of His Kingdom and of the proving of all who will be found faithful, worthy to share in that Kingdom as members of His Bride. **[R5399 : page 46]**

For such as receive Him He will make a feast. Out of the Divine Word He will bring things new and old, for their refreshment and comfort. The Bible will become to them a new

Book; they will feast upon the riches of God's grace, and the dark things will become clear, the hidden mysteries shall be revealed. The Master Himself will be the Servant, the Revealer, the Setter-forth of these viands of Truth. Many Bible students believe that we are now living in this very time; and that each faithful, watchful follower of Jesus will be granted a hearing of the knock and the privilege of participating in this feast, which many tell us they are now enjoying.

"But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into." The great Teacher here intimates that Satan, the Prince of this world, is the master of the present order of things on earth; and that at His Second Coming He will bind this strong man, or master of the present order, and overturn present institutions and establish instead the long-promised Reign of Righteousness. It will be this thorough transition from the Reign of Sin and Death to the Reign of Righteousness and Life, which will cause the great Time of Trouble mentioned everywhere throughout the Bible as marking the closing of this Gospel Age – "a Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation." – Daniel 12:1; Mark 13:8; Matthew 24:21.

Here and elsewhere Jesus speaks of His Second Coming as thief-like. The thought is that He will be present for a time, unobserved by the world, known only to the Bride class, the salt of the earth, whom He will remove – changing them from earthly nature to Heavenly. Verse 40 confirms this thought, and instructs all the Lord's faithful that they should be ready for His presence, to render up at any hour their accounts and experience the change. **[R5400 : page 46]**

"TO GIVE THEM THEIR PORTION"

St. Peter was perplexed. Was this parable especially for the Apostles, that they should watch, etc., or was it for all the people?

he inquired. But the Lord did not answer him directly. He merely assured St. Peter that at the appropriate time the Lord would appoint a steward over His household, to give them their portion of food in due season. This is not very different from what has been the Lord's usual method of dealing with His family. While a measure of the Spirit is given to each for his profit; and while the Holy Spirit thus given is to guide the recipient into a knowledge of the things of God, nevertheless the Lord has been pleased to use special instrumentalities at various times.

For instance, St. Peter apparently for a time was a leader amongst the Apostles, in opening the Pentecostal door, and later in opening the door to the Gentiles – preaching to Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. Later on, the Lord seems to have specially chosen St. Paul to be His particular messenger to the Gentiles; as we read, "He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name unto the Gentiles." (Acts 9:15.) Similarly Enoch, Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, and others during this Gospel Age, have seemed to be especially used of the Lord to draw the attention of His people to His Word. In the case of the Apostles, there was of course a plenary or special inspiration, which does not appertain to others of this Age since.

While the Lord has thus appointed special servants in handing to His household meat in due season at various times, it was required of each one who would partake that he should prove, test, determine whether or not the teaching was of God. He was to prove all things by the written Word of God, which the Apostle Paul declared is sufficient that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. Any servant not found faithful, it is intimated, would be supplanted by another.

The servant at the end of the Age, at the time of the Master's coming, if found faithful, would be especially blessed, and be given a general charge respecting the spiritual food to the Lord's family,

the "meat in due season." But if he should prove unfaithful and fail to recognize the Master's presence, and manifest an unkind spirit toward the household, ministering to his own earthly wants rather than to the spiritual needs of the family of God, he would be removed in that day – cut asunder, separated, allowed to go into outer darkness with the world in general, in utter ignorance of the times and seasons, etc., of his Lord. The assumption is that the displacement of the one servant would mean the recognition of another to supply the Household of Faith.

On the basis of this parable the Lord explained a general principle of His dealings; viz., that any servant, knowing his Master's will and not doing in harmony therewith, would receive stripes, punishments, tribulations, of some sort, in proportion to the degree of his knowledge and opportunity. On the other hand, any servant, even if he did things worthy of stripes, yet did them ignorantly, would receive proportionately fewer stripes. In a word, the general principle is that "to whom much is given, of him much is required."

OUR GOLDEN TEXT

The heart of this lesson is found in Verse 37, which refers to all of the Lord's servants who will be living at the time of His Second Coming – who in the earliest stages of His Second Coming, in the time of His Parousia, His presence, will be faithfully watching, on the alert to serve every interest of the Lord's cause, seeking His will, doing His will, searching the Scriptures, obeying the Scriptures, to the best of their ability. These will be informed to a certain degree respecting the time in which they will be living, as the Apostle points out, saying: "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." "Ye are all children of the light, children of the Day." "For the Day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night, in the which they [the world] will say, Peace and safety; and they [the world] shall not escape [the

tribulations of that day]." "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that Day shall overtake you as a thief." "Ye are all children of the light, children of the Day." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-8.) "Let us therefore walk, not in darkness, but in the light."

The secrecy observed respecting the time and the manner of the Second Coming of Jesus will prove to be a strong test. All of the Lord's consecrated ones who are overcharged with the cares of this life – business, pleasure, etc. – will be slow to hear the knock; and even when they hear, they will be too much engrossed to give heed.

However, there will be a great blessing on those servants whom the Lord at that time shall find watching – not watching the sky, as though they would see Jesus, when He is now a spirit being, invisible to humanity, but watching the Bible testimonies, watching the trend of the times, watching their own hearts, watching also the interests of the Church of God, seeking to build one another up in the most holy faith, laying aside every weight and every besetting sin. Let all of us who claim to be virgins – pure ones – who claim to be the Lord's servants as well as His brethren – let us be found of Him in peace, seeking first the Kingdom of God and the righteousness which it inculcates; let us be found alert, watching for opportunities of usefulness in the proclamation of the Kingdom Message, and in helping the Bride to make herself ready. – Revelation 21:9; 19:7.

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