



THE GOSPEL OF  
**Luke**

**SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 12:35-59**

To understand the importance of living with the second coming in mind.

## “Prince of Peace?”

There are a lot of titles given to Jesus throughout the scope of the Old and New Testaments, one of which (a perennial favorite among evangelicals) is “the Prince of Peace.” The hopes of Isaiah 9:6, that a conquering redeemer would come and fix all the problems in the land, is a hope that can still be felt today. With as much tension and strife as there is in the world, we would love to see the Prince of Peace come and end it all. However, in Luke 12:49-53, Jesus says something of Himself that is quite opposite of Isaiah 9:6: “Do you think that I have come to give peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division” (Lk. 12:51). What are we to make of this seemingly dissonant statement? While it is true that Jesus has brought peace to His people (namely, between us and God), it does not necessarily follow that Jesus will bring peace in the hippy, 1960’s kind of way. Jesus’ arrival will bring division, not unity; hostility, not peace. He will set some against the other based on who believes in Him and who rejects Him unto judgment. In Luke 12:35-59, Jesus begins to prepare His disciples for this second coming with stark warnings about how we should behave in the meantime.

## Parables Upon Parables

Verses 35 through 48 unfold several parables, all of which point to the same objective: “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Lk. 12:40). Below is a breakdown of each of the parables.

**DRESSED**

The first thing Jesus says is in verse 35: “Stay dressed for action” (ESV). The translation here is sound but does not fully convey the Old Testament allusion likely present. The literal rendering of the Greek is “Let your waists be girded,” imagining the act of tucking one’s cloak inside their tunic in order to be able to move more freely. This is the same verbiage found in Exodus 12:11 during Israel’s flight from Egypt on the first Passover: “In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.” Jesus is pulling on the sudden readiness of the Israelites to leave on God’s command.

**KEEP THE LIGHTS ON**

He says additionally: “Keep your lamps burning” (Lk. 12:35). Lamps, as have been previously discussed, usually convey the idea of revelation. In other words, being prepared for Christ’s return means in some manner to not allow the revelation of God to grow dim in your life.

**THE MASTER AND SERVANTS**

Verse 36 begins a series of interwoven parables, all of which result in the same conclusion, but are a bit confusing together. For example, the first parable is about a master who will arrive on either the “second watch, or in the third” (Lk. 12:38), and thus Jesus warns of the dire need of the master’s servants to be ready and on watch for the return of their master so that they can “open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks” (Lk. 12:36). In this sense, the disciples are to be like the servants. However, Jesus quickly pivots to another parable wherein the master is caught unaware by a thief. If we read this as one cohesive parable, it would seem like Jesus (the “master” in the first parable) is somehow unaware of the schemes of Satan (the “thief” in the second parable). However, that isn’t the point being conveyed. Both of them simply highlight the importance of staying ready and not being caught unaware.

From this point, Jesus then moves into an almost hierarchy of what happens to the servants who are not wise and ready for their master’s return. The one who is wise will be rewarded with all of his master’s possessions (Lk. 12:44). However, the one who grows tired of waiting and begins “to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk” (Lk. 12:45) will be cut into pieces by his master and put with the unfaithful (Lk. 12:46). The one who isn’t violent, but is also not at all prepared will be “severely beaten (Lk. 12:47), and the one who was ignorant of the master’s desires “will receive a light beating” (Lk. 12:48). The point of these different intensities of punishment are, again, not meant to be taken literally. Christians who grow weary and act foolish are not going to be dismembered by their Lord! The point of these distinctions is capped off by Jesus’ words in verse 48: “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand more.” In other words, servants who have a lot of responsibility and a great deal more understanding of the revelation of God will be held to a higher standard. James, the half-brother of Jesus, emphasizes this point in his own letter: “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (Ja. 3:1). Jesus’ words are to remind us of the increasing responsibility we have as we grow in deeper intimacy with Him and the Father through the Holy Spirit.

## Interpreting the Times

Jesus then turns to the crowds in verses 54 and 55 to begin to speak to them, and appeals to their ability to predict weather patterns based on what they see in the sky: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens.” This is not some kind of prophetic ability; Jesus is using very basic reasoning here. If you can see a rain cloud on the horizon, it stands to reason that it will rain soon. If you feel

the wind blowing from the south (assuming you're in the near east), it stands to reason that the wind will be hot (because it comes up from the desert). In other words, anyone should be able to deduce such things. And yet, they are unable to recognize the Son of God who does things that only the Son of God can do (Lk. 12:56). It's important to note that while Jesus has just been speaking about remaining prepared for His second coming, this passage does not have to do with being able to predict the second coming of Christ. Jesus is not chastising them for their inability to know when He will return. The "the present time" (Lk. 12:56) that Jesus speaks of is *their* present time, not *ours*. He is calling them out for their inability to recognize who He is and act accordingly.

## Knowing the Right Thing

Finally, Jesus says in verse 57: "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?" He then says that when someone accuses you of wrong, every attempt to make things right should be exerted prior to coming before a judge. The point of this is not to avoid judicial inquiry, but rather that if you *have* wronged someone, you *know* you are wrong and you should own it. You shouldn't need a judge to settle a dispute but should be able to do so because you know what is right and wrong. This is reminiscent of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:5: "Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers?" Humanity has the law written on their hearts (Rom. 2:15). While we are unable to do the right thing because we are spiritually dead apart from Christ (Eph. 2:1-4), we do know what is wrong and simply willingly break God's law. However, within the community of God, the Spirit of God empowers us to live by the Spirit and not the flesh (Gal. 5:16-17). We should, as we wait for Christ's return, seek reconciliation at every turn.

## What About Now?

One takeaway is the importance of always being mindful of Christ's second coming, and to live accordingly. It doesn't mean that we quit our jobs and sit outside in lawn chairs, looking to the sky. It means that we live with kingdom mindedness and intentionality in everything we do. Another takeaway is the reminder that Jesus' message is one that will bring peace between God and men, but likely strife between men and other men. Finally, we ought to always work towards reconciling any wrongs we've committed.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Luke 12:35-38. What are the three illustrations Jesus uses to emphasize needing to be mindful of the second coming. What actions would the servants need to take in order to be "blessed?"

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2. Read Luke 12:39-40. What is the main idea of this sub-level parable within a parable?

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### Day Two

1. Read Luke 12:41-44. What does Peter ask Jesus? How does Jesus respond? What is the "blessed servant" like?

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2. Read Luke 12:45-48. What is the violent servant like? What will the master do to him? What is the complacent servant like? What will the master do to him? What is the ignorant servant like? What will the master do to him?
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### Day Three

1. Read Luke 12:49-50. What did Jesus come to do?
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2. Read Luke 12:51-53. What did Jesus come to give? What will this division look like, practically speaking?
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### Day Four

1. Read Luke 12:54-56. What does Jesus say the crowds are able to do? What are they *not* able to do?
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2. Read Luke 12:57-59. What does Jesus say the people ought to be able to do on their own? What is the main idea of this exhortation?
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## Week 50 Discussion: Be Prepared

In Luke 12:35-59, Jesus warns His disciples to be prepared for His second coming. In other words, followers of Jesus are to live with the reality of the second coming in mind in such a way that it shapes our decisions and actions. Talk as a group about how living with the second coming in mind motivates you to live out your faith more fully.

1. Icebreaker: If you knew that Jesus was coming back next week, would you live your life differently? Why or why not? If so, what specifically would you change?
2. Do you believe the second coming impacts the way you live your day-to-day life? If so, how?
3. In what ways could you be more mindful of Jesus' return?
4. Would you share the Gospel more, less, or the same if you knew for sure Jesus was coming back next week?
5. Would you be more generous if you knew Jesus was coming back next week?
6. What are practical things you can begin to change in order to better live with the end in mind?

## Takeaways:

1. Jesus tells His disciples of the importance of being prepared for His second coming.
2. Jesus tells His disciples to keep short accounts in light of the second coming.