

## On the watch

### a. The faithful servant & the wicked servant (12:35-48)

**12:35-38 How can we know WE are watching?**  
(Matt.24:45-51; 25:1-13; 1 Pet.1:13)

[1] [12:35-38] Of all the sayings of Jesus, there is not one whose influence had made itself more felt in the writings of the N.T. than this (1 Thess. 5:1,2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3, 16:15); it had awakened a deep echo in the heart of the disciples. It indicates the real meaning of waiting for the second advent of Christ. The Church has not the task of fixing beforehand that unknown and unknowable time; she has nothing else to do, in virtue of her very **ignorance, from which she ought not to wish to escape**, than to remain invariably on the watch. This attitude is her security, her life, the principle of her virgin purity. **Frederic Godet** Luke p.348 (emphasis added)

[2] [12:37] This is perhaps one of the most wonderful promises which is made to believers anywhere in the New Testament. It must probably be interpreted figuratively. The meaning evidently is, that there is no degree of honour and glory which the Lord Jesus will not gladly bestow on those who are found ready to meet Him, in the day of His second Advent. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p. 88

[3] [12:35-48] We have a habit of dividing life into compartments. There is a part in which we remember that God is present; and there is a part in which we never think of him at all. We tend to draw a line between sacred and secular; but if we really know what Christianity means we will know that there is no part of life when the master is away. We are working and living forever in our great task-master's eye. **William Barclay** Luke p.168

[4] [12:35-38] The faithful believer is described as a servant waiting over night for the arrival of his master who is returning from a journey. That there may be no delay in opening the door when he

shall knock. he keeps himself awake, up and ready to run. The lighted lamp is at his hand; he has even food ready against the time of his return. And it matters not though the return is delayed, delayed even to the morning; he does not yield to fatigue, but persists in his waiting attitude. **Frederic Godet** Luke p.347



**Thomas Gray**  
(1716-1771)

When the English poet made famous the phrase "ignorance is bliss", he was referring to the blessed innocence – and consequent happiness – of childhood. Gray was NOT excusing the willful ignorance of adulthood!

"The point is not what a man should do to be saved, but, what ought a saved man to do?" – **J.C. Ryle**

**12:39,40 What fact assures us the Lord will not be fooled by impure motive? (John 2:23-25)**

[5] [12:35-48] His disciples must inwardly be so bound to Him and so loyal to Him that the greatest passion of their lives will be to look forward to His Advent, faithful in the performance of their daily vocation. **Norval Geldenhuys** Luke p.362

[6] Are we ourselves living as if we were ready for the second coming of Christ? Well would it be if this question were put to our consciences more frequently. It might keep us back from many a false step in our daily life. It might prevent many a backsliding. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 pp. 87,88

**12:41-48 As usual, no direct answer! Why not? How should we deal with Christ's question? (v.42 – and v. 48 is certainly something for us in the "Christian west" to think about continually - Rev.5:9,10, Amos 3:7)**

[7] Peter is sure that it has reference to the Twelve: the question is whether others are included. The employment of parables would make him suppose that the multitude was being addressed, as in ver. 16; for Jesus did not commonly employ

## The Saviour who never stoops to speaking 'smooth things'

[11] [12:48] Great gifts are to be used with great diligence; and great trusts, and powers, and charges, are rather to be feared than sought. Little do the conquerors of the world, or those that strive for church preferments, believe and consider what duty, or what deep damnation, they labour for. ... Few expressions in the Bible are more unfavourable to the heathen who die in ignorance of the Gospel than this. It is vain to conceal from ourselves the solemn truth, that no degree of ignorance makes a man entirely guiltless and excusable in the sight of God. Our very ignorance is part of our sin. **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p. 94

[12] Few places in the Gospels contain such strong expressions as this. It is a vain delusion to suppose that the Gospel speaks nothing but "smooth things." The same loving Saviour who holds out mercy to the uttermost to the penitent and believing, never shrinks from holding up the judgments of God against those who despise His counsel. Let no man deceive us on this subject. There is a hell for such an one as goeth on still in his wickedness, no less than a heaven for the believer in Jesus. There is such a thing as "the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. 6:16.) **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 2 p. 92

this kind of teaching with His permanent disciples. The spirit of the question resembles Jn. 21:21, and the answer resembles Jn. 21:22. In Mk. 13:37 we have what looks like a direct answer to the question here asked by S. Peter, "What I say to you I say to all, Watch." **A. Plummer** *Luke* p.331

[8] [12:42] But although the words of the Saviour are especially addressed to all office-bearers, they are nevertheless also to be applied to every believer – each one is appointed to bear responsibility in the spiritual care of others. **Norval Goldenhuys** *Luke* p.363

[9] [12:43] The lesson is one which many, unhappily, shrink from giving, and many more shrink from receiving. We are gravely told that to talk of "working," and "doing," is legal, and brings Christians into bondage! Remarks of this kind should never move us. They savour of ignorance or perverseness. The lesson before us is not about justification, but about sanctification – not about faith, but about holiness. The point is not *what a man should do to be saved*, but, *what ought a saved man to do?* **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p. 90

[10] [12:43] This saying seems to assume that the apostolate will be perpetuated till the return of Christ; and the figure employed does indisputably prove that there will subsist in the Church to the very end a ministry of the word established by Christ. Of this the apostles were so well aware, that when they were themselves leaving the earth, they took care to establish ministers of the word to fill their places in the Church. This ministry was a continuation, if

not of their whole office, at least of one of its most indispensable functions, that of which Jesus speaks in our parable – the regular distribution of spiritual nourishment to the flock ... **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.349

[13] [12:41-48] The *stewards*, although slaves (ver. 45), were servants of a higher rank. The [*therapeia*] is the general body of domestics, the *famulitium* of the Latins. This term corresponds to the *all* in Peter's question, as the person of the ruler to the *us* in the same question. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.349

[14] [12:48] ... i.e. that knew not fully... , for there is no such thing as absolute moral ignorance (Rom. 1:20, 2:14,15). **F.W. Farrar** *Luke* p. 231

[15] The lesson of these words is one of wide application. It demands the attention of many classes. It should come home to the conscience of every British Christian. His judgment shall be far more strict than

that of the heathen who never saw the Bible. It should come home to every Protestant who has the liberty to read the Scriptures. His responsibility is far greater than that of the priest-ridden Romanist, who is debarred from the use of God's word. ... The day will come, when knowledge unimproved will be found the most perilous of possessions. Thousands will awake to find that they are in a lower place than the most ignorant and idolatrous heathen. Their knowledge not used, and their light not followed, will only add to their condemnation. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 pp. 92,93

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## **b. Dividing necessary to multiplying! (12:49-59)**

**12:49-53 How can the Prince of Peace talk this way? What is the necessary prelude to peace? (Is 'peace to my house' necessarily the Lord's blessing? (Isa.32:1,2,9-20 - How did Isaiah's 'gospel' sit with his generation?)**

[16] [12:49,50] "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" "Is it a time," said Elisha to the unfaithful Gehazi, "to receive lands and cattle when the hand of God is upon Israel," that is to say, when Shalmaneser is at the gates of Samaria? Is it a time for the believer to give himself up to the peaceable enjoyment of earthly goods when the great struggle is beginning? **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.352

[17] To the question whether we think Jesus came to bring peace most of us would unhesitatingly reply 'Yes'. But Jesus' *No* is emphatic (*ouchi*). ... He does bring peace, that deep peace with God which leads to real peace with men. But in another sense His message is divisive. ... Jesus calls on His followers to take up their own cross ... When men do not rise to this challenge they not uncommonly become critical of those who do. The divisions that thus arise may run through families (*cf.* Mi. 7:6). Incidentally, the *five* of verse 52 has not grown to six in the next verse, for the

*mother* and the *mother-in-law* are identical. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.219

[18] [12:50,51] "How am I oppressed, afflicted, until it be finished": comp. 8:37; Job 3:24. The prospect of His sufferings was a perpetual Gethsemane: comp. Jn. 12:27. While He longed to accomplish His Father's will, possibly His human will craved a shortening of the waiting. Comp. Phil. 1:23. With Jn. 19:28,30. ... It was the belief of the Jews that the Messiah would at once introduce a reign of peace and prosperity. Jesus does not wish His followers to live in a fool's paradise. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.334

[19] [12:49-53] That was one of the great reasons why the Romans hated Christianity – it tore families in two. Over and over again a man had to decide whether he loved better his kith and kin or Christ. The essence of Christianity is that loyalty to Christ has to take precedence over the dearest loyalties of this earth. A man must be prepared to count all things but loss for the excellence of Jesus Christ. **William Barclay** *Luke* p.170

[20] [12:49-53] There is something at first sight very startling in this saying. It seems hard to reconcile it with the song of angels, which spoke of "peace on earth" as the companion of Christ's Gospel. (Luke 2:14) ... But wherever there are hearers of the Gospel who are hardened, impenitent, and determined to have their sins, the

## **Is it Christianity that divides?**

[25] Let us never be moved by those who charge the Gospel with being the cause of strife and divisions upon earth. Such men only show their ignorance when they talk in this way. It is not the Gospel which is to blame, but the corrupt heart of man. It is not God's glorious remedy which is in fault, but the diseased nature of Adam's race, which, like a self-willed child, refuses the medi-

cine provided for its cure. So long as some men and women will not repent and believe, and some will, there must needs be division. To be surprised at it is the height of folly. The very existence of division is one proof of Christ's foresight, and of the truth of Christianity. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p. 98

very message of peace becomes the cause of division. They that are after the flesh will hate those that are after the Spirit. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p. 97

### **12:54-56 Why will not (NOT cannot) most recognize the time? (21:34-36)**

**[21]** [12:54-56] The majority of the Jewish people of the time when Jesus was on earth failed to discern the signs of the times and did not recognise and accept Him as the Messiah. The result was that indescribable calamities visited them – calamities which reached a gruesome culminating-point in the total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. **Norval Geldenhuys** *Luke* p.369

### **12:57-59 A high priority for lovers of peace (yet again the connection of peace & righteousness - Isa.32:16-18)**

**[22]** [12:54-59] Jesus used a very vivid illustration. He said, “When you are threatened with a law-suit, come to an agreement with your adversary before the matter comes to court, for if you do not you will have imprisonment to endure and a fine to pay.” The assumption is that the defendant has a bad case which will inevitably go against him. “Every man,” Jesus implied, “has a bad case in the presence of God; and if he is wise, he will make his peace with God while yet there is time.” **William Barclay** *Luke* p.171

**[23]** In the ultimate court of life, the adversary is God, the magistrate is God, and the judge is God, and the exactor is God ... carrying out the sentence. **G. Campbell Morgan** *Luke* p.160

**[24]** [12:58] It is evident that our Lord made use of the same illustration on two different occasions, and with two entirely different applications. In the Sermon on the Mount, the words are used to enforce the great duty of forgiveness of injuries. In the passage before us, our Lord’s object appears to be to enforce the solemn duty of seeking timely reconciliation with God. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p. 106