

Luke Study 5 - Be Ready for Jesus' Return

12:35-13:9

Introduction

'Jesus is coming. Look busy.'

So reads the bumper sticker. It's easy to make fun of the idea of Jesus' second coming isn't it? Even for Christians, it can be hard to believe that Jesus really will come back. The facts of his life, death, and resurrection? They're easy to believe: they've already happened, and they're recorded in history. But him coming back again? With all of that skies-being-torn-in-two and coming-to-judge-the-living-and-the-dead stuff? That's harder to swallow. We do believe it, technically: you get in trouble in Christian circles for not believing that stuff! But in practice, we find it much harder to believe: that one day, Jesus really will return to judge the world. And that he could do so at any moment. If we're honest, that's a Christian doctrine that has almost no impact on our day-to-day lives.

But Jesus teaches - clearly and forcefully - that he really is coming back. And that we need to be ready for when he does. In fact, he teaches it in the next section of *Luke*, which we're going to look at now. Having told his disciples not to worry about this life (12:1-34), Jesus now tells them to prepare for the next (12:35-13:9). So let's get into it.

Read Luke 12:35-40

1. Jesus is continuing to teach his disciples (see 12:22). What does he tell them to do? (vv. 35-36)
2. What will happen if they obey? (vv. 37-38)
3. Jesus changes the image to tell them what will happen if they *don't* obey. What will happen? (v.39)
4. What does Jesus mean by all this? (v.40)

Jesus tells his disciples always to be ready for his return, because they have no idea when it will be. If he finds them ready, he will reward them: it will be like a banquet. If he doesn't find them ready, he will punish them: it will be like a break-in. So, the disciples - and us - are always to be ready for Jesus' return.

But one of the disciples, Peter, has a question: who is Jesus speaking to specifically? Is this just for the disciples, or everyone?

Read Luke 12:41-48

5. Jesus introduces a new character into the mix, the 'manager' (v.42)
 - a. What is his job? (v.42)

- b. What will happen if he does it well? (v.43-44)
 - c. In context, who do you think Jesus is talking about?
6. But then Jesus says there are different ways the manager could act ('servant' in vv. 45 and 47, and 'the one' in v.48, refers to the manager in v.42).
- a. What's the first way they could act? How will the master react? (vv. 45-46)
 - b. What's the second way they could act? How will the master react? (v.47)
 - c. What's the third way they could act? How will the master react? (v.48a)
7. What's the general principle at play in all this? (v.48b)
8. What is the warning for leaders of God's people here?

Peter asks if the need to be ready for Jesus' return is just for the disciples, or for everyone. Jesus doesn't reply directly, but does say the more you know about Jesus, the more you'll be held accountable if you're not ready when he comes. In particular, if you're a leader of God's people, you'll be held more accountable: if you're *actively* disobedient, you'll be sent to hell; if you're *passively* disobedient, you'll be beaten with many blows (but still retained in the household); if you're *ignorantly* disobedient, you'll be beaten with fewer blows. The bottom line is: be ready for Jesus' return, especially if you know it's coming, and especially if you're a leader of God's people.

Jesus has said: be ready for my return. But what does 'be ready' mean? Jesus now explains what being ready means for those who already follow him, his disciples.

Read Luke 12:49-53

- 9. What has Jesus come to do? (v.49)
- 10. What do you think this means? (See 3:16-17)
- 11. What does Jesus need to do first before this can happen? (v.50)
- 12. What do you think *this* means? (See Mk 10:38)
- 13. What will the result of all this be for humanity? (vv.51-53)
- 14. What do you think this will mean for disciples of Jesus as they wait for him?

Jesus has come to judge the world: to divide it into those he will save and those he won't. Those he will save he will do so through his 'baptism': by being plunged into death on the cross. Those who don't accept his salvation will burn in judgement (v.49; 3:17). This end-time division of people will divide people now: the world will split into those who

follow Jesus and those who don't, even dividing households. So, for disciples to be ready for Jesus to return, they must maintain their allegiance to Jesus, even in the face of opposition and division. That is what it means for them to 'be ready' for Jesus' return.

But what about those who are not yet disciples of Jesus, who don't yet have any allegiance to keep? How can they 'be ready' for Jesus' return? Jesus answers this question as he now turns to his wider audience, the crowd.

Read Luke 12:54-59

15. What's the principle Jesus lays out in the illustration in vv.54-55?
16. How does that apply to how they should interpret 'this present time?' What do you think Jesus means by 'this present time?' (v.56)
17. What's the point of Jesus' story in vv.57-59?

Jesus says people can tell the *meteorological* future from the signs; why can't they tell the *future of his coming* from the signs, i.e. his current life and ministry? Surely it's clear from what he's doing that he's a person of divine significance, who will one day return to judge the earth. So, before it's too late, they're to settle their debt with their adversary and avoid judgment. That is, they're to do what they need to do to get right with God. That's what it means for them to be ready for Jesus to return: to *become* one of his disciples.

Jesus makes the same point when another group of people bail him up in the crowd.

Read Luke 13:1-9

18. What's the main point Jesus makes when he responds to the report? (vv.1-5)
19. What's the main point of the parable Jesus follows it up with? (vv.6-9)
20. What does this tell us about the urgency of repentance?

Jesus tells the crowd that everyone needs to repent, not just those who look like they need to (because something bad has happened to them, and so they must have done something bad to deserve it). And there is still time: the owner of the vineyard is willing to give them one more season to bear fruit. But there is not *much* time: it's just one more season and if they don't bear fruit, they'll be cut down. So, Jesus' message is the same as in 12:54-59: if you're not yet a disciple of Jesus, you need to get ready for his return by becoming one.