

STAYING AWAKE IN THIS THIRD WATCH

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This morning I would like to go into a subject that we looked at a few years ago. We've referred to it many times, but we haven't done a study like we did when we first brought this out. I shouldn't say brought this out, but when we first studied it.

The title this morning is Staying Awake in this Third Watch. We'll start in the book of Luke. We know that every scripture has its application, and the Lord gives us clues as to what those applications are.

Luke 12:35

Jesus says *Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning.*

In English it says let your *lights* be burning, but as we look at other translations many of them say let your *lamps* be burning. We know that we read about lamps back in Matthew 25. Let's go there this morning. This is where we read about the wise and the foolish virgins.

Matthew 25:1

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Notice, it doesn't say that they took their lamps to go to the wedding. It speaks of the wedding later on, but here it says to *meet* the bridegroom. A very important part of this is that first word *then*. We could go back and read through Matthew 24 where the Lord speaks of many things that were going to happen down through time leading up to His coming for the church, but when we get to Matthew 25 he says *then*.

This is not something that has happened throughout the Grace age or even the Gentile age. What do I mean by that? We don't have both wise and foolish virgins in any of the first six church ages. As God saw the conditions that would exist when the Word would be restored in this Laodicean church age, He saw how He was going to work. God Himself would *then* extend a portion of Grace for some who would not have the draw to the deeper things of the Word of God, nonetheless they would be saved.

They would know that there is a true Living God who is a powerful and real God. When it comes to the deeper things, there might be a certain initial effect on their heart, but the pull would not be there to go as far as the Lord would want to bring them. So they were foolish.

Matthew 25:2

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Here we have to be careful: in our human affection we love our family, we love our friends, and we should. We should pray for them. But we must not get to the point where we say, everybody out there in the organizations or in the Charismatic movement are the foolish virgins. If that were the case, Jesus would have said there were five wise and a thousand foolish.

He said there were *five* foolish, so that's not the majority of Christianity. We must be able to see that. They are a minority.

You might ask, what separates the foolish virgin from the tare? Because we know neither one is bride. First of all, the foolish virgin is still a virgin. The foolish virgin is saved. We don't see the Lord telling the foolish virgin, evil servant depart from me. We don't see that they are called workers of iniquity, nor that they are cast into outer darkness.

Now there is a certain darkness, because when they fail to see the light, the full light, then yes there is darkness, but not as far as them being called evil or workers of iniquity.

What actually separates them as far as what we see? The foolish virgins are not going to be speaking against the Word that God is bringing in due season. What do I mean by that? Basically, the foolish virgins are content with the manifestation of the power of God.

To a certain extent, they may be familiar with what God has done in this age. They may know some basic information about Brother Branham and also Brother Jackson. It depends when they came in contact with this message.

As God brings His Word in His time, the foolish virgins are not a people who are working against it, nor speaking against it. That's what the tare does. The foolish virgins are just happy. They want to see more manifestations of the gifts, healings, and things of that nature, the more visible manifestations of the Spirit.

God has given them a certain portion of the Spirit. As He knows their heart, He's not going to give them the full portion that would pull them into the knowledge of truth as He has you and me. He already knows their heart will not go to that full extent.

Matthew 25:3

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.

When we first read that, it might look like they didn't have any oil. We know oil represents the Holy Ghost. I just said that they have a portion of the Holy Ghost. Let's keep reading a little more.

Matthew 25:4

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Praise the Lord.

The picture that's portrayed here is that the foolish, yes they have some oil in their lamps. But the wise, they have decided: we need a full portion, so they have taken vessels with their lamps. They have oil *in their vessels* as well. Praise the Lord. Whereas the foolish, the oil in their lamps, it can only burn so long and then their lamps will go out. Amen.

Now if we go back to Luke 12:35 he says *let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, or your lamps burning.*

This is not just that we have the lamp. Let's remember a couple of things: number one, this Word was not written to make you a good foolish virgin. Do we understand that? This Word was written to the Bride.

Yes the foolish virgins, they get a little bit out of it. Even the tare gets something out of it. The tare knows many things as far as the knowledge. In fact they may have a lot of knowledge.

What did James say? He said *you believe that there is one God*, he said *even the devils believe, and they tremble.* [James 2:19] Amen. The purpose of the Word, and who it is written for is the Bride of Christ.

When Jesus said *and your lamps burning or your lights burning* [Luke 12:35] what is that? First of all, we know the Holy Ghost is the oil. Our lamp cannot burn if we have not received the Holy Ghost. Amen. The burning, what does that do? It produces light. He is speaking here of the Holy Ghost, as we let it work in our life, it gives us light.

What is light? In the natural, when the light is on we can see and know what is around us. The word *light* here is speaking of our *spiritual understanding*.

Sometimes people take the word *burning* and they only want to apply it to excitement. When we allow the Holy Ghost to show us the *light of the Word*, yes there *is* an excitement. Praise the Lord. That is part of the burning. Praise the Lord. But at the end of the day, it's not just an excitement such as: praise God, the Spirit of God was in service today, oh we were all just jumping for joy.

I have to say that's a wonderful thing, and yes those times of refreshing come from time to time. But the *light from the oil* is how the Holy Ghost *allows us to see where we are living in time* according to the revealed Word of God.

Now if we can see that the parable of the wise and foolish virgins is for this Laodicean age, we all know how it says that *there was a cry at midnight*. [Mathew 25:6] Amen. We know this is pointing directly at the ministry that God gave to Brother Branham.

There was no cry of that nature in any of the previous church ages. This has only taken place in the seventh church age. So when Jesus says *have your lamps burning* [Luke 12:35] we have to understand this is speaking of the same period of time.

Luke 12:35 does not apply just anywhere in time. As we continue to read further, we will see there is a specific application for this. This is the first clue as he speaks of the lamps burning.

Here we have a little picture. Today we have artificial light. We just need to flip on the light switch. In those days after the sun went down they had to have fire. That was how they were able to see in the dark.



I have to say, we are absolutely living in a time of great spiritual darkness. Mankind seems to be doing everything they can to erase the things of God from their conscience. And when they cannot avoid it, they will blaspheme and make fun. We are living in a dark day spiritually.

Even in the church world it's a dark time. We have more access to the Word of God than ever before, yet the nature of the people is: they are so happy just to be saved. They say let's all get together and let's all love one another.

Salvation and love takes up ninety percent of what is taught today, at a time when God has opened up so much for the true believer to feast on. Praise the Lord. That food gives us strength. Praise the Lord.

Luke 12:36

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding.

This is not talking about returning from the wedding ceremony. We know that once we arrive there, all of our struggle will be over. Praise the Lord. Amen.

To understand what he is talking about, we have to understand a little bit how they would have a wedding in the old Middle Eastern culture and tradition. There were really two parts to it.

Today we say that people are *engaged*. Back then, in a certain sense, that was already the confirmation of their marriage. In that sense they would be considered married but they still did not live together. That may be six months or a year in advance. At that time they may have a short ceremony which was more, we could say, their *engagement*. That was when they would be *betrothed*. That was the seal of their marriage. During that time, there was a *preparation* made of where they would live, and also a preparation for the wedding itself: the ceremony and reception.

Here when it says *the wedding* [Luke 12:36] we think of it as the event, and yes that is the final focus. But this is looking at what we would call today the *venue* and the *preparation* there. In other words: we have the tables, we have the chairs, and we have the decorations. We've decided what food will be served and we have all the supplies. The chefs have been hired and the program is ready. So as this Lord is making *preparation*, he's coming back from time to time to give updates on how it's going.

I started by explaining part *B* of verse 35 to help us see where this is in time, and now I'd like to look at part *A* before we continue.

Luke 12:35

Let your loins be girded about,

If we were to ask someone what it means to *gird the loins*, they may not know because that's not a phrase we use today. In part, it's because we have a different type of clothing.

Today if someone is going to be in some kind of a battle or working around certain machinery, there is a warning: don't wear clothing that's all loose because the machine can grab it and it's dangerous.

This aspect of girding up the loins was a way of taking their attire that many times was more like a robe, and they would tie it in certain ways so they could do some serious work. Or if they were going out to battle, so that they could fight. Girding up the loins was *being prepared for action*.

We can't be sleeping spiritually and say that we have girded our loins. We have to be ready for a fight. Now this is not a fight against our brother and our sister, or any other person per se.

As God brings His Word in this end time, we have to understand that as long as there is no opposition from the enemy, everybody can say, glory to God we're so happy we see that. We can say we have to stand for truth. And it's easy to say praise the Lord, amen, we are standing for truth. But we have to remember and understand: there is an enemy.

He's not just sitting back and watching the church rejoice as the Word of Truth is brought forth. He's going to come against it, and he's going to use every avenue he can to achieve that. He has brought false teachings that contradict the Word of God.

Also in this day, as that gray horse rider is riding [Revelation 6:8] he says doctrine divides. Some are even saying: let's not let the devil divide us anymore. I have to say *be careful!* Amen.

In this same chapter Jesus himself says *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.* [Luke 12:51]

What is he talking about here? Jesus could see that as there would be a *few* people who would receive the Word and walk in the light of truth, the enemy would come against that with another message. If he can't get us believing a lie as far as doctrine, another tactic is to get us to believe a lie about unity.

They claim they have unity by putting their differences aside and trusting the Lord to work that out in time. That's the way it's spoken: first we have to learn how to love one another.

I have to say *time is short*. We must be able to see that the Lord is not coming a hundred years from today. His coming is *at the door*, just a little bit in front of us. We can't say we're going to put everything to the side and the Lord will deal with it in time.

The Lord himself said *the Holy Ghost will guide you into all truth*. [John 16:13] Praise the Lord. If my heart is right and if truth is what I desire, then He's going to lead me in the truth. Praise the Lord.

When he says *Let your loins be girded about* [Luke 12:35] we have to understand this is a serious time. There is a spiritual battle taking place and I want to be on the winning side. Praise the Lord.

We have to be ready for battle, individually. We have to have a desire: Lord what's in this Word? Show it to me. Amen. That means we have to be reading the Word. We have to have a life of prayer. And we must have a heart that truly sees the beauty of the truth of the Word of God.

Now let's go ahead and continue reading.

Luke 12:36

when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Is this talking about the Lord coming and knocking on our heart's door for salvation? We know there is a day when he does that, and we have to open up our heart. But in this day we have to be able to see, the Bride of Christ in this Christian walk is not a people that just says: Praise God I'm saved. I have brothers and sisters. I have a place to go to church. I can worship Him on Sunday. I can feel the presence of the Lord. If I'm sick I know He can heal me. If I need a job, I know He can give me a job. Yes that's all part of it, but the Bride Church is going to be illuminated with the light of this Word, so he says *when he knocketh they open immediately*.

When He comes with something else, we must be ready to receive it. In the natural, especially before there were doorbells, when someone knocks on the door, some people hear it and they run at once to open it. Others may take a few moments to realize someone is knocking but once they do, they will go open the door. People who hear knocking will not ignore it, and hear it again and again and keep ignoring it.

When the Lord brings something new, we may not all see it instantly. We may have to read it a few times and pray about it. It may even take us a few months before we say praise God I see it! But in the scope of God's time, as long as we have had a sincere heart and our desire is to receive what He has, to Him that's immediately.

That doesn't mean just because this brother says it we have to accept it even though we don't see it. But let's bring it before the Lord. Let's ask the Lord. Let's read the Word. Let's pray about it. Amen.

When they consider something that the Lord has brought and five years later they say: well I still don't know. I just don't know. I don't understand it. Now let's think about this: God is going to bring the gospel to the Jews who have gone two thousand years not believing that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. He is going to open that to them and they will receive it in three and a half years. Amen? So when it gets to the point that it's been five years, ten years, and they say they still don't know, I have to say *they don't want to know*. If we have a desire, God can show it. Praise the Lord.

Luke 12:36

when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Luke 12:37

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.

In the past, we may have thought this is speaking of the coming of the Lord for his church.

Luke 12:38

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch,

This reminds me of a song:

He's coming soon, He's coming soon.

With joy we welcome His returning.

It may be morn, it may be night or noon.

I don't know if they were reading this verse when they felt to write that song. Jesus is not saying that when he comes back for the church, you better be ready because it may be at two in the morning or it may be at five in the morning. How many can understand? If he's going to come at two in the morning for his church, believe me, he's going to have you awake. Praise the Lord. That's not what this is about. You say but it says *his coming*.

Well let's go to the book of John. We know when the disciples were gathered after Jesus' resurrection and he asked Peter *do you love me?* He said *feed my sheep*. He also said *feed my lambs*.

John 21:20

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee?

John 21:21

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

John 21:22

Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

John 21:23

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

The brothers said *oh John is not going to die because of what Jesus said*. Maybe they felt that even more strongly as they began to see some being martyred and John was still alive. For John, that could've been a nice thing to accept, oh praise the Lord I'm not going to die. But John himself wrote *that was not what the Lord said*. He wrote: the Lord did not say *John is not going to die*, but he told Peter *if he tarries till I come, what is that to you?*

Now let's go to the book of Revelation. This was written by the same John.

Revelation 1:10

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Revelation 1:11

Saying,

Then what do we see? Depending on your Bible, you may see red letters. What does that mean? Jesus is speaking.

Revelation 1:11

I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Revelation 1:12

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 1:13

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

We could continue to read this description. Because of the way Jesus was presented here, John did not say that it *was* the Son of man. There were certain things that had changed as far as his vesture and his appearance. But you and I have the *understanding* that this was a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have to say *the Lord came to John* throughout the entire Book of Revelation. No, not in literal form but notice these words are in red: *I am Alpha and Omega*. [Revelation 1:8] Amen. We can read prior to that where he says the Lord *sent and signified it by his angel* [Revelation 1:1] or later *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you*. [Revelation 22:16] Yes the angel is the messenger but the angel comes *representing* the Lord. Amen.

What I want us to see is that the Lord came to John on the Isle of Patmos, right? What did he do? He brought him *his Word*. Amen. He brought the Word to John, and John wrote the Word.

Today he comes to the church, but he's not bringing more for us to write. He could have done that, because even what John wrote was not for his day. This was something the Lord had locked up as a special treasure. You say Brother what do you mean he had it *locked up*? They've been reading it ever since it was written! Yes but the Lord had not come to shine light on it.

All they could see is that one day there's going to be a great climax to all of this and God will unleash his wrath. The true understanding of how this is going to be executed and the meaning of it is something the Lord has been opening from the time of Brother Branham, and he is still opening in our day.

Now let's go back to the book of Luke.

Luke 12:37

Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself,

The Lord shall gird himself. He's going to *get to work*. How?

Luke 12:37

and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

He's going to give them *fresh meat*. Praise the Lord. He's going to cause them to sit down and he is going to serve them.

Another thing I want us to look at is in Revelation where it speaks of the Lord knocking on the door. The message to the Laodicean church begins in Revelation 3:14. The Laodicean church age is our age, right? That's the age we are living in.

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This is a similar passage but concerning our individual walk. What I want us to see is that he speaks this to the Laodicean age. When we return to the book of Luke we see that *when he comes and knocks, they open to him immediately.* [Luke 12:36] That helps us know where to place it in time: it's in the *Laodicean age*.

Let's continue to read in Luke.

Luke 12:38

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

He doesn't mention the first watch. Did he come in the first watch? Absolutely! That was what started all of this under the ministry of Brother Branham. He doesn't need to mention it because that was the beginning where everybody came in, if they entered.

We know the Pentecostals as a group failed to walk on in the Word of God. Oh they loved Brother Branham. But when he began to say the name of Jesus is the only way. There is no other way but baptism in Jesus' name. They said he was not being humble enough. They said he was being strong. Well he was strong because the Word of God is strong.

When he said speaking in tongues is not the initial evidence, oh they didn't want to hear that. As a group they rejected the message. But God pulled some out of the Pentecostals and even out of all the other groups: Baptists, Methodists, unbelievers, Catholics. He pulled them out and they went on into further truth. Praise the Lord.

In just a short period of time, a couple years, God took his servant off the scene. Everyone was in shock. They said: we thought he was going to lead us to the rapture. Well if we can see the *light of the Word* that he brought, *that* will lead us to the rapture.

Then God was going to test their understanding. They had been excited about his ministry and they had heard what he said. Did they have just a head knowledge, or was it the Spirit of God that had given them a true revelation?

If it's the Spirit of God that's leading us, then when God uses another man by the same Spirit, we will be able to receive just as we did in the previous watch.

We know Brother Jackson gave an account many times, how after Brother Branham's funeral all the preachers who knew him went out to eat. When they were done eating, now why didn't they ask while they were eating? But after they were done, one of them yelled across the parking lot: Brother Jackson are you with us? He said in what? They said he has to rise again, speaking of Brother Branham. Brother Jackson said he'll rise in the resurrection. Right then, there began to be a cut of fellowship

Do you think that made Brother Jackson feel good? He had friends just like you and I have friends. Basically the entire message movement, which was not nearly as great as it is today, but those that had been in fellowship with Brother Branham, they cut him off. What was it over? Well really it was over *the Word*.

Brother Branham the man was not the Word of God. Brother Branham the man was not the Son of man. He was not the Lord Jesus Christ. Brother Jackson said he will return in the resurrection. By that he meant the general resurrection and they understood that.

God began to use Brother Jackson to continue in the truth, to continue in the same message. He began to bring things out to which Brother Branham himself had opened the door: the Prehistoric Age, the Testing and Fall of Satan. Then the Branham movement said they didn't come to church to learn about dinosaurs. Well that was not the point.

Brother Jackson was not preaching to teach about dinosaurs. That is a beautiful truth but they rejected it. Everything that God used him to bring out they rejected. So tell me: did they have the same Spirit? We know they did not.

Now I'm out of time so Lord willing I will be able to finish this on Thursday. I will close reminding us of the title: Staying Awake in this Third Watch. Let's pray.