

DEDICATION

The truth of Christ's Parable of the Porter is dedicated first to the Glory of Him Who spoke it, and Whose Second Coming will bring to completion His sons' promised inheritance.

Secondly this booklet is dedicated to the Pastors and authentic Christian members of the many churches with which we have ministered, to those whose faithful dedication to the Word of Christ promotes His truth among the men to whom Christ spoke it. May the sweet truth of Christ's return for us, and the end of this life of suffering, be blessed to His Body, whose attendance upon Christ and His Word of Truth makes such written sharing of His coming Presence possible.

“WATCH”

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or

THE PARABLE OF THE PORTER

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Mark 13: 34

Being an exposition of the teaching of Jesus Christ recorded in *Mark 13: 26, 32-37*, concerning His imminent return to earth, and the urgency for all men to watch for Him to return.

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Published by

**Bible Truth Inspirational Ministries, Inc.
Post Office Box 4
Wagoner, OK 74477
1-866-269-4477**

PREFACE

Some years ago when this author was first saved, he met a new and very real Person named Jesus. He was a real and tangible Person in my everyday life. He was found Him to be a constant source of peace and joy and delight. He is nice to know.

As a result of such a pleasing experience with my Savior, I began to long for His full and literal and bodily presence. It was in those first months after conversion that when startled by an unexpected clap of thunder, I immediately looked up into heaven, expecting to see the glory of Jesus in the clouds coming for me. My mind was much on His Second Coming and on His promise of a future unhampered and uninhibited presence with me. I even had dreams of His coming when the sky would roll back as a scroll is rolled up, and beyond it was the golden glow of His approaching glory. But alas, when awakened it all was a mere dream.

And many such experiences were to be known before more understanding of His coming was mine. I still yearn for His coming, though it is somewhat more maturely considered as in keeping with the Scripture revelation. Regardless, I still crave to see Him Who loved me and gave Himself for me. I desire to touch the One Who considered me on the cross and included me in the atonement of His blood. I want actually to see with my eyes and to touch with my physical senses Him, Whom having not seen I love; in Whom, though now I see Him not, yet believing, I rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

For all men, that longing, craving, yearning, for Him is not in vain, either for advantage in this life or in the next. Watching brings much personal profit and growth through the constant stretching of the soul toward Jesus. That spiritual exercise is always the corollary of looking for His Second Coming. Folks will be bettered now by looking for Him to return, and will find in *that*

day yet future, that they have not desired nor sought nor strained in their love for Jesus pointlessly. Those who look anxiously for Jesus to return will find themselves becoming somewhat more steadfast and unmovable. And they will be always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they are continuously experiencing that their labor wrought out of a heart which longs for him is not longing in vain for the Lord. Walking closely with Him will in itself be a present reward for watching and also a promise of yet future greater blessedness over yonder in glory. Watching does indeed result in knowing by experience something of what His literal Presence will be.

For those reasons we send this booklet forth for the present joy and good of Christ's loved ones. The prayer of this author is that by watching for Him you will become more joyful and steadfast in faithfulness to Him; and will be found unto praise and honor and glory at His appearing, The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

With such sequential blessings, both now and later, how can we not Watch for Him? Amen!

“WATCH”

The Parable of the Porter

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Mark 13:26, 32-37

“Watch”: The Command of Jesus

Jesus evidently desires His disciples to be watching for Him to return. He purposely has kept us all wondering just when He will appear in the heavens for us. But what is the profit in this speculation, and how are we helped when filled with so many puzzling questions about the time of His return? Why is watching commanded by Jesus? Why is it so important to be watching for Christ to return? This Scripture parable contains Jesus’ teaching on watching for Him to return and gives some answers to these kinds of good and proper questions. Through correct understanding of this teaching from Jesus, we will have some insight into the value of watching for Him to return.

“Watch”: A Longing Fulfilled

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ will fulfill the longing of every Christian. A genuine saving experience with Jesus arouses one’s hopes of experiencing His literal physical presence, and produces in the believer a yearning to reach and to realize His Second Coming. First, following the peace which occurs at conversion, there is great joy from an overwhelming impression of Christ’s immediate spiritual presence. There usually follows immediately a growing awareness of Christ’s promised imminent second and bodily coming to earth. That awareness is a motivation for the Christian to seek more and more spiritual encounters with one’s blessed Savior. This spiritual presence of the Indwelling Christ titillates an arousal for more and more of His nearness. Spiritual comprehension of Him now is a foretaste of what blessed joy will be savored when His bodily presence emerges from the heavens. As the Scripture is learned, the disciple experiences more enthusiasm for Him through just anticipating His real, literal, bodily closeness. Consequently, one’s initial salvation encounter with His spiritual Presence leads to an awakened interest in His Second Coming, and to a heightened expectation of one’s own foreordained and planned physical rendezvous with the glorified Christ.

For a Christian, His Second Coming will mean the literal presence of Jesus, as is indicated in one of the Greek words translated *coming* in the Authorized Version. That Greek word is parousia,¹ meaning literally, “being beside” or “a presence.” It denotes an arrival of someone and an ensuing presence with him or her, as it was often used in older Greek literature. It was used of the disciples’ bodily presence with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration in *II Peter 1:16*. Accordingly, it is often used of the

¹ Parousia, a combination Greek word from para, “beside”; plus ousia, “being,” from the Greek “to be” verb, eimi.

“coming” of Christ for the church. It emphasizes not just His movement to the earth, but signals His arrival for the church and His ensuing presence with His disciples from that moment of His Second Coming until His manifestation to the world.¹ Consequently, it denotes mostly the beginning of an eternal presence with Jesus as Paul’s references to His “coming” often emphasized,

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words. *I Thessalonians 4:16-18*

The joyful reality of His Spiritual presence causes an anticipation of the fuller joyful reality of His bodily or whole presence that begins at His Second Coming. Because of the initial joy and blessed spiritual reality known when first saved, the Christian quite instinctively and spontaneously begins to look for, watch for, expect, and anticipate, His Second Coming or bodily presence, which could occur at any time. That initial joyful experience with the present Indwelling Christ causes the Christian to desire more and fuller experiences with such a wonderful Savior. Therefore, Christians learn to anticipate Jesus’ complete and bodily coming (presence) with them personally. This looking for Jesus’ coming is a trait of a Christian; and when it is a continuing outlook, it can be an evidence of being Spirit-filled.

The circumstances of Jesus’ teaching in *Mark 13:32-37*, our text, helps uncover the truth of His meaning in it. The occasion

¹ *I Corinthians 15:23; I Thessalonians 4:15; 5:23; II Thessalonians 2:1; James 5:7,8; II Peter 3:4.*

of this teaching is the so-called Olivet Discourse as found in *Matthew, Chapters 24, 25; Luke, Chapter 21; and Mark, Chapter 13*. That discourse concerns, among other things, the signs of His coming (parousia, presence). But Mark alone of the synoptic writers used the illustration of the Parable of the Porter to accent the need to be watching for His coming. Only two parables are peculiar to *Mark*, this Parable of the Porter, 13:34 and The Parable of the Growing Seed, 4:26-29. Because *Matthew* and *Luke* each have nineteen parables that are peculiar to them, this distinctive Parable of the Porter should be studied carefully since it undoubtedly has special significance. All three Synoptic Gospels stress this watching, but in somewhat differing degrees and emphases. *Matthew* gives this “watching” great emphasis in the parables of Unfaithful Servants, Ten Virgins, and Talents. Those three parables have this looking, awaiting, and serving idea as is contained in *Mark’s one* Parable of the Porter. *Mark’s* testimony of the importance of watching for Christ is this lone, yet concise and concentrated, Parable of the Porter. It merits close scrutiny.

Analysis of these verses must first of all conclude that Jesus most emphatically commands that all men—disciples or not, Christians or not, godly or not—be watching for Him to return. Secondly, Jesus’ teaching emphasizes reasons why His disciples, and all of mankind, are to be watching for His Second Coming. Accordingly, we divide this exposition of His teaching into these three fundamental reasons why we are to be so engaged in watching for His return.

All must watch for Christ’s return because:

- I What Watching for His Return **Involves**
- II What Watching for His Return **Acknowledges**
- III What Watching for His Return **Stimulates**

REASON # 1

We are to be constantly watching for Jesus because:

WATCHING FOR HIM INVOLVES A PASSION

In analyzing Jesus' teaching in *Mark 13:32-37*, we notice the repeated references to watching: *verse 33, watch and pray; verse 34, watch! verse 35, Watch ye therefore; verse 37, Watch.* The word *watch* occurs in 4 of the 7 verses. But watching for what? *Verse 26* establishes the setting of this teaching from Jesus and provides the answer, namely, watching for Jesus to return to earth,

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Mark 13:26

Watching for Jesus: Its Passionate Meaning

Word meanings are critical in understanding what Jesus meant for us to grasp about this watching. He used two different Greek words that are translated *watch* in the Authorized Version; and in both words, He set the tone for His parabolic illustration in *verse 34*, and His subsequent, related instructions about *watching* in *verses 35-37*. The different words are not contradictory, but complementary to each other. Understanding both words used will aid in understanding Christ's parable and His teaching in our text.

In *verse 33* Jesus used agruneo, "to be wide awake, watch." It is a positive word. "The word expresses not mere wakefulness, but the watchfulness of those who are intent upon a thing."¹ In the Greek world it was used of a businessman whose interest was intent upon his wares, upon his commerce, his livelihood. The translators caught this idea of intensiveness by rendering this one word with two English words, *watch and pray*, in *verse 33*.

¹ W.E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (Revell Company: Westwood, 1966), p. 201.

But in *verses 34, 35, 37*, Jesus used a more negative word, gragoreo, of not sleeping, of keeping awake, “to watch.”¹ It has more or less the same meaning as agruneo, but from the viewpoint of not sleeping, not being “unalert.” Its spiritual meaning refers to spiritual alertness, not falling asleep in this matter of awareness of Jesus’ imminent return.

Watching for Jesus: Its Passionate Value

Jesus links these joint ideas found in these two words—intensiveness upon Him in His affairs, and spiritual alertness—as an eagerness for the things of God. Possession of these virtuous traits is linked to His imminent return and one’s strong belief in it, and to the faithful fulfillment of Jesus’ personal instructions to each disciple during His absence.

Because the translators of the Authorized Version joined together this *watching* with *prayer* in *verse 33*, they obviously understood that this kind of watching was filled with eagerness toward God, which would without exception find expression in prayer. The two would naturally be together in the spiritually intense Christian. Prayer goes with this *watching* to which Jesus referred. True prayer consists of spiritual alertness and intensiveness upon Christ, as marked by one’s watching for Him to return. That concept of genuine spiritual living and true prayerfulness was the spirit apprehended by the psalmist,

My soul followeth hard after thee.

Psalms 63:8

The attitude involved in this *watching and praying* is to be fully occupied with God in a kind of prostration of the soul, wherein one follows *hard after God*. This is the same *walk with God* that preceded Enoch’s translation from this earthly realm directly into God’s domain.

¹ Vine, loc.cit.

*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not;
for God took him. Genesis 5:24*

This is the wishing of the heart for God and the soul reaching out toward God (Christ) as the Christian *watches* for his Lord Jesus to return in bodily presence. When He comes again, that joy which has been foretasted through His Spirit¹ will be known in its fullness; and that fullness is only possible in His presence, and will be ours forever at His parousia, His coming, His Presence with us,

*Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy
presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are
pleasures for evermore. [Added emp.] Psalms 16:11*

The Apostles often enforced their exhortations to spiritual alertness, to faithfulness, and to our focus upon spiritual realities through references to Christ's return,

*Let your moderation be known to all men, The
Lord is at hand. Philippians 4:5*

*But the end of all things is at hand: be ye
therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.² I Peter 4:7*

The concept is this: Those who are intent upon Christ will be looking for Him to return; and conversely, those who are watching for Him to return are intent upon Him and upon His commandments, Word, and work. By a continuous mind-set upon Christ's imminent or about to happen bodily and complete Presence, one is made very much aware of His continuous indwelling spiritual Presence, and of one's prevailing responsibility to Him. Both mark a concentration upon Christ, and each in turn influences and cultivates the other, making them mutually inclusive inner encouragements, the one to the other.

¹ *Ephesians. 1:13-14*

² See also *Hebrews 10:25; James 5:8-9; Romans 13:11.*

Accordingly, in this teaching in *Mark*, Jesus demonstrates the kind of watching which indicates the demeanor that must characterize His disciples in His absence. Watching for Jesus Christ to return cultivates, advances, and refines the Christian's experiences in the real number one passion of the Christian life, namely, more knowledge of and a growing intimate relation with His Presence, and hence with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians are to be watching for Jesus to return because watching really consists of an endorsement of His presence. It shows an approval of His literal presence here on earth. To live life here on earth while watching for Him to return endorses the whole concept of the advantages of His actually being here on earth. Watching for His presence is an admission of one's yearning for Him, and will advance the Christian into deeper experiences with one's Savior and with the joyful service that He calls us to do. As a person desires His physical Presence, he will grow in his appreciation of His already felt and known spiritual Presence.

REASON #2

We are to be constantly watching for Jesus because:

WATCHING FOR HIM ACKNOWLEDGES HE IS LORD

Jesus Christ is Lord, always was, always will be. He is the Almighty. However, not always has He chosen to exercise that Lordship. That is what our redemption from sin is all about. But that work is past and watching for His return acknowledges that, and the accompanying changes in His position.

Watching for Jesus to Return Acknowledges His Changed Position

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. *Mark 13:32*

At the time of these words, Jesus was living on earth and was subjected to the ordeal of His humiliation. His knowledge was altogether in submission to the Father's plan for the redemption that He had come to accomplish. Some certain sects take this verse to prove that Jesus is not equal with the Father. Since He did not know what the Father knew, therefore they reason, He is not equal to the Father in omniscience or in any other Divine attribute. They misuse *John 14:28* in a similar way,

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. *John 14:28*

Jesus plainly states His subservience to the Father, at least, that His Father in heaven, to Whom He would return, was at that time greater than He was on earth. That was the reason the disciples

should have rejoiced, because Jesus was going to return to the Father. He would then and there be restored to His original dignity and to the full use of His powers as Deity. He was telling them that as long as He remained on earth He was limited as to the full use of His rightful position as God. But on other occasions, Jesus plainly claimed equality with the Father in essence,

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

Therefore the Jews sought to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

[Added emp.] ***John 5:17-18***

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how saith thou then, Shew us the Father? John 14:9

These verses in John together with *verse 32* in our text mean that while on earth and during the days of His humiliation, Jesus was indeed subordinate and secondary to the Father. He voluntarily laid aside His exalted position as God The Eternal Son in order to *be made flesh*.¹ It was only because of the limitations of a human body and all the condescension that He accepted for the redemptive purposes of God that He was made secondary to the Father for a little while.² He would die as a Man and so satisfy the demands of God's holiness for the payment of the sin of His people. Paul referred to it as an "emptying of Himself" (KJV *made himself of no reputation*) in *Philippians 2:7*,

Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God],

Did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained

¹ *John 1:14*

² *II Corinthians 8:9*

But stripped himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity] so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being.

And after he had appeared in human form he abased and humbled himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of [the] cross,¹ [Added emp., underlined portions only]

Philippians 2:6-8

In this quote from The Amplified Bible, the underlined portion is the “emptying of Himself” to which our text *verse 32* and *John 14:28* refer. He gave up all the requisites of His original deity as God The Eternal Son to the Holy Spirit’s prerogative in favor of God’s planned redemption of His people. As the Holy Spirit granted Him those powers for the purpose of redemption, He possessed and manifest the attributes of Deity (See *John 1:47-49; 2:24-25*, et al., for examples of the exercise of His Deity.). But when it was beneficial for the purposes of redemption to withhold those powers, He gave them up to the Holy Spirit to be withheld as He directed the God-Man on earth. Thus, Jesus lived in absolute obedience to His heavenly Father in order to fulfill the perfect life which would be the supreme example of perfection in man, and at the same time and through the same yieldedness, be the sufficient Divine sacrifice for man’s sin on the cross.

Therefore, the question arises: How did it benefit God’s plan of redemption for Jesus not to know the day or the hour of His own return during His life on earth. While no one can claim a full knowledge on this rather profound subject, perhaps it was the value of a constant reliance upon the Father that necessitated this area of the unknown for The Man Jesus. Since it was for the purpose of redemption that He was here, and since it was a time for suffering, for ignominy, for humiliation, it was best that Jesus not be unnecessarily cluttered with knowledge that was too

¹ The Amplified Bible (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, n.d.), p. 306.

prominent for Him at that time during His humiliation. While fulfilling the sufferings, it was not helpful to be occupied with the yet future day of His return when He would appear the second time without regard to sin and suffering and pain, but only with regard to a then completed and accomplished salvation.¹ Jesus was the perfect and ideal Man, Who cried out to God during those days of deepest debasement and voluntary weakness, as expressed by the psalmist and Christ's own holy Apostle,

LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.

Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever. *Psalms 131:1-3*

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared:

Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. *Hebrews 5:8-9*

It was to promote *hope in the LORD* that the Holy Spirit withheld this knowledge from Jesus at that time. His limited knowledge was an inducement to faith and to trust in His heavenly Father's will for Him to be thus emptied. Jesus must unquestioningly trust His Father's imposed limitation upon His powers to know the day or the hour of His own return. That unknowing, undiscerning, restriction placed upon Him, was itself a part of His condescension and humiliation. But today, since His position at the Father's right hand is resumed, all the attentive powers as God are again fully His. That knowledge is of Deity and is of value to His redemptive work as the God-Man. He knows precisely the day and the hour and everything else about everything else.

¹ See *Hebrews 9:28*, p. 27

Today, as men on earth watch for His return, they are acknowledging His regained Throne as The Almighty God. As we Christians are intent upon the things of heaven, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God's power and glory, and watch for Him to return, it is to His glory and praise and honor to acknowledge Him thus appropriately. It is important that we, therefore, watch for Him to return at any time, because in so looking for Him, we are acknowledging His status as having been changed since the humiliating days of His first advent. He will return to earth as God, Almighty, and Supreme.

Watching for Jesus To Return Acknowledges Our Physically Unchanged Position

*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not
when the time is.* *Mark 13:33*

While Jesus has changed His status from humiliation to exaltation, from darkness to light, from unknowing to a full knowing, we Christians have not yet changed our earthly position; *we know not when the time is*. We are still subjected to the lowly experiences of this earthly life. Even though possessors of all the inheritance of Christ, we Christians must remain amid these humble and degrading circumstances until He does return.

Watching for Jesus = Living as He Lived

Yet we believe Christ Jesus will deliver us completely from these same types of limitations as Jesus knew during the days of His humiliation. Even though we are of the divine nature, we cannot actually claim all our rights as full and mature sons of God. Looking for His return in humble faith is to a large extent to live as He lived. Just as Jesus lived out His life in absolute obedience and trust in His Father's plan for our redemption, so must we. As He trusted in God's providential control of events and in His own deliverance from evil, even in like manner must we also trust fully in God's will and in His sovereign timing for our completed

deliverance at Jesus' return. By watching for His return we Christians live in faith just as He lived in faith.

Furthermore, this watching is an acknowledgement by us of His yet unfinished and final work in our redemption. Obedience to His command to *watch* for Him to return requires a self-emptying of oneself under the mighty hand of God. This humble faith pleases God, and exalts the Son's glorifying work for us sinners. As we Christians look eagerly to heaven in anticipation of the coming, complete, and final, salvation of our bodies, God is glorified by our believing in and counting on His completed works of love and grace in our behalf, though we still are in very humble circumstances. This is the faith that pleases Him.

Without faith it is impossible to please him.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 11:6a, 13-16

Watching with the entire soul predisposed to heaven's promise of a final and ultimate salvation when Jesus does return is glorifying to Christ. For His disciples to continue to believe His promise to return to earth with a completed salvation honors Jesus Christ and His Father. Furthermore, it is edifying to the Christian as he continually meditates upon what Christ's literal Presence will mean to him when He does return,

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.

For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Romans 8:23-15

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. I John 3:2-3

For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Philippians 3:20-21

Watching for Christ Jesus to return acknowledges that we believe He is God and that He shall return as the Almighty God and Savior to complete our change into His glorious image, even though we are presently suffering affliction and disrepute in this world, even as He did.

REASON # 3

We are to be constantly watching for Jesus because:

WATCHING FOR JESUS STIMULATES SUCCESS

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Watch ye therefore....

[Added emp.] *Mark 13:34-35a*

These verses contain The Parable of the Porter, a great truth about serving Jesus in His absence. Jesus interprets it for us by designating Himself as *a man taking a far journey, who left his house* to the keeping of his servants with certain responsibilities, who upon returning would call the servants into account concerning their faithfulness. This parable follows the pattern of many others but with one important exception; there is no accounting mentioned in this parable. This is significant because watching now in this life is the emphasis instead of any future accounting. Jesus stresses that watching for Him to return has certain advantages gained now in this life that will accrue and accumulate in the life to come.

The Passion of a Porter

The key to this parable and to Jesus' interpretation and application of it is in understanding what a porter is. The Greek word for a porter is thuroro, and it denotes a doorkeeper or gatekeeper—a servant, or sometimes a member of the family who did the work of a porter. It was the duty of the porter to speak with any visitor who knocked on the door desiring admission. The purpose of this was to give opportunity to recognize the voice of the visitor, and identify him as a friend; therefore the visitor did not expect that the door would be opened as soon as the knock was

heard. The porter inside would customarily call out, “Who?” And the outsider, instead of giving his name if he was known to the inhabitants, would rather answer, “I.” The Easterner was accustomed to listen to the voice and would be able to recognize a friend.

One such example of a porter, or at least someone who was doing the work of a porter, is found in the *Acts*,

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. [Added emp.]

Acts 12:13-14

Peter had been thrown into prison by Herod and was to meet with the same evil destiny as James' death *with the sword* (*Acts 12:2-3*). While the church made much prayer for Peter, the angel of the Lord came and released Peter from prison. He came to the house of John Mark's mother, knocked at *the door of the gate*, and spoke to Rhoda in order to identify himself. When she recognized his voice, as the acting porter or doorkeeper, she failed to open to him upon the sole testimony of the sound of his voice as she should have, but instead discourteously kept him waiting outside the house. This incident serves to demonstrate the work of a porter or doorkeeper, namely, to listen to the voice of the seeker, and upon that alone to allow entrance; in other words and in the words of Jesus, a porter was to *Watch*.

That this watching is the emphasis is obvious because of the repeated references to *watching* both before the parable and after it; and by the *ye* which begins *verse 35*, *Watch ye therefore*. *Verse 35* is the beginning of Jesus' application of the parable to Christians and to all men; and that very significant *ye* is a plural, which applies the porter's responsibilities to all Christians, and secondarily to all men, even non-Christians.

In the parable only one porter is in the house; that was in keeping with the standard culture of that day. Only one servant had the responsibility of a porter. Jesus could not reasonably violate that standard feature of a household and retain credibility with the parable, but He applied the duties of the single porter to all His servants with the use of the *ye* plural in the next verse, *verse 35*. *Watch ye therefore* is a reference to the porter's duty in the parable, whose single duty in the parable is the universal duty of all Christians, and yes, all men until He returns. The success or failure of Christians' work depends upon the great truth that this parable emphasizes.

In this parable, the emphasis is not some future accounting but is a present and continuous *watching* by the servants. This means that the faithfulness and the ensuing success of Christ's servants in their appointed tasks in their Master's absence is governed by their *watching*, which will assure the responsible performing of Christians' ministries. Any future accounting is dependent upon the *watching*. That is, if one has *watched* constantly for his Lord to return as a porter *watches*, then there is an assurance that any and all accounting to his Savior for the work done in His absence will prove to have been faithfully and profitably performed. A Christian porter's constant watching for Him to return will have accomplished faithfulness and made Christ's acknowledging, *Well done*, a reality.

Watching for Jesus to Return Stimulates Successful Evangelism.

The parable has, besides the porter's duty to watch, two references to duties or obligations of the servants (Christians). First, all the servants had certain authority, because the *man* in the parable *gave authority to his servants*; this is indeed what Christ has given to all His servants. In Jesus' absence He has obliged all Christians to use the authority of the gospel either to loose or to bind men,

And I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven

Matthew 16:19

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:18-20

Every Christian has this authority of the gospel. Jesus left, but before He ascended into heaven He made clear that *all authority (power, KJV) was given unto Him*; therefore He could grant authority to His servants in His absence, just as in the parable. That authority is freedom to use the *keys of the kingdom of heaven*. Those *keys* are the *Rock* (Christ) and the message of the Christ (*The Rock*) and His gospel. The same kind of faith as confessed by Peter in *Matthew 16:16, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*, appropriates a freedom from the bondage of sin. The gospel to be taught to all nations will either *bind* men in their sins or *loose* men from their sins. What is done with *The Rock* (Christ), Who, as regards the salvation of mankind, is inherently and fundamentally wrought up in the gospel, determines whether men's natures will be creatively loosed from, or obstinately continued in, bondage under sin; and thus saved from perdition or lost to it.

The references to authority in *Matthew 16:19*, as to *binding* or *loosing* men, are future perfect verb tenses in the Greek. As such they should be translated, *shall have already been bound* or *loosed*. This means that the use of this authority to *loose* men and to *bind* men is determined in heaven before the action on earth takes place.

Therefore, the verse would be rendered thusly:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth [with the keys] shall have already been bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth [with the keys] shall have already been loosed in heaven.
Matthew 16:19

In the parable, Jesus conditions the successful use of each servant's authority upon *watching* for the master to return. And so it is in Christ's work of the gospel. It is only as Christians are leaning on God, as they are intent upon Christ, as they are spiritually alert, that they will be able to discern the work of *binding* and *loosing* men from sin. The work of saving men is a spiritual work of God's Holy Spirit and God's sovereign choices, and those who are looking for Him to return are spiritually in tune with the God Who saves. They are intent upon Him and upon His commandments, Word, and work. They are, by their continuous mind-set upon Christ's imminent, or about to happen, bodily and complete Presence, made very much aware of His continuous spiritual indwelling Presence. They are *filled with the Spirit* of His Presence, Who leads the "watchful" Christian to use the *keys of the kingdom of heaven* at the proper time and in the proper way. That timely and regulated use of *the keys of the kingdom of heaven* will assure success in our efforts at evangelism, as we use wisely the authority given us by our Master, Jesus. Watching for Him to return stimulates the necessary wisdom for victorious evangelism.

Watching for Jesus to Return Stimulates Successful Service for Christ

The second duty or obligation of the servants in the parable was giving *to every man his work*. While authority was given to all servants, each had a peculiar and specialized work of his own. Each had a duty to perform that was unique and was for him and him alone. But just as with the use of the authority given, success

was dependent upon *watching* for his lord to return. This is the case with all Christians also. The Lord has left each Christian with a special work to do and a particular spiritual gift or gifts to effect the assigned work in His present absence.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [everyone].

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally [separately] as he will.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. [Added amp.] I Corinthians 12:7, 11, 27

In these references to the gifts of the Holy Spirit one outstanding truth is dominant: Each Christian has unique and special spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit to profit the entire Body of Christ. Jesus has, as in the parable, divided to every man separately as He willed certain tasks to be performed in His absence. But in addition, He has provided the means to perform those duties by the power, ability, and faculties of the Holy Spirit granted to each Christian. All Christians have certain respective ministries, gifts, and different works to do within the household of God, the church. But according to the parallels in the parable, the successful accomplishment of His work assignment in His absence is dependent upon *watching* as a porter would for Him to return. As with the proper use of the authority to *bind* or to *loose* men in their sins, so the successful realization of Christ's ministry assignments is only possible as the Christian looks toward Him. Spiritual alertness with one's attention upon Him brings the coordinated work of Christian and Spirit, of disciple and Indwelling Christ, of man and God, which combination alone creates success and victory for each servant in his ministry assignment. This is precisely the same Word of Jesus in *John 15:5, He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.* Watching for Jesus will result in acute awareness of Christ's abiding spiritual presence, and accordingly, He will assure successful operation of the spiritual gifts necessary for the accomplishment of His will in our assigned work.

Watching for Jesus to Return Stimulates Separation from this World's Darkness.

*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the
master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or
at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:*

Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.

Mark 13:35-36

The main duty of a porter was to listen for the voice of the person outside the door. In the case given in the parable, the duty was imperative upon the porter that he be well acquainted with the voice of his master. And as in Jesus' application of the parable in *verses 35-36*, every Christian is to be acting as a porter who knows well the voice of the absent Christ. That is why success in ministry (using the authority and the spiritual gifts given) is absolutely dependent upon being porters. Only those who are intent upon hearing the voice of Jesus will be successful users of the authority to loose men from their sin. And only those who are spiritually alert can exercise the proper God-given spiritual gifts to the edification of the church and to the glory of God. When Christians bend their entire souls toward heaven to hear Jesus' voice, and when they have their spiritual ears tuned to the tone of the Saviors chords, only then will the authority succeed and the work be enriched.

Also, the daily strain of the porter's listening at his master's door kept him fitted for the task to recognize at once his master's voice. He had to keep constantly in mind that the master's voice had a special ring, or had a particular twang, or had a vibrating resonance, or whatever marked it apart from all other voices. That is the value of the Christian doorkeeper. As he listens daily for the sound from heaven, *Come, it is I at the door*, he will be so intent upon hearing the Savior's voice that he will hear clearly and distinctly the spiritual Indwelling Christ as He talks from within, *This is the way, walk ye in it*. As he daily listens to the Indwelling Christ, he keeps fit to know every tone of utterance

from His Savior. How could not success be his who listens for and keeps uppermost his Savior's inner voice as the constant sound for motivation in life? That is the supreme value of *watching* for Jesus to return. Watching as a porter keeps a Christian spiritually alert as he is intent upon Christ. He is engrossed upon hearing His sweet voice utter every desire and every wish to His servant; and finally perhaps one day very soon he will hear the voice of Jesus say to him in rapturous melody, *Come up to Me, it is I*. Only Christian porters who are faithfully watching will know His voice and go up to meet Him in the air,

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.
[Added emp.] *Hebrews 9:28*

In that manner Jesus applied this Parable of the Porter to Christians for the added blessing of separation from the present darkness of this world. The separation is both literal at His coming, and spiritual during our lives down here. Watching for Him to return will instinctively and spontaneously result in a separation from the darkness of this age, without regard to its varying degrees of evil. Darkness in Scripture is often used in reference to sin.¹ The warning, *Lest he find you sleeping* refers to doing what is usually done in darkness. Men sleep in the dark, signifying living a life in accord with the sin of this world. But Christians are not of the darkness or of the night. They are *children of light*.

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

I Thessalonians 5:5-7

¹ *John 3:19-21; I John 1:5-7; 2:9-11; et al.*

Watching for Jesus brings spiritual alertness that will result in lives that are free from the *sleep in the night*. Sleep is the natural act for darkness, and means that the Christian has begun to live in accord with and in harmony with the darkness of this age. It means that sin has crept in, because the coming, or Presence, of the Lord has not been uppermost in the thoughts of the Christian. Separation from the world, and wakefulness amidst the darkness of this world, is possible for those Christian porters who listen intently for the coming Christ; and as a consequence, they listen to the Indwelling Voice of Christ tell them, *Go and sin no more*.

Watching the World is Superficial

Christ warns that He may come at any one of the four Roman watches of the night in *verse 35*. They are respectively *even*, 6:00 p.m. till 9:00 p.m.; *midnight*, 9:00 p.m. till 12:00 a.m.; the *cockcrowing*, 12:00 a.m. till 3:00 a.m.; and *morning*, 3:00 a.m. till 6:00 a.m. The importance of these four watches is very great. This importance is not that the particular times are so detailed, but that Christ broke down the night into four different stages. That is, the period of this world's darkness is divided into four differing degrees of darkness. It is not so dark at *even*, 6:00 p.m. till 9:00 p.m., as at *midnight*, 12:00 a.m. till 3:00 a.m., etc. Since this darkness signifies the sinfulness of this world, and since Jesus divided that darkness or sin into four differing degrees of darkness, therefore His coming cannot be foretold even by the depth of evil in this world. The overall measure of evil on the earth will become greater and greater, but according to Jesus that measure will be no sure gauge for determining when He will return. Therefore, the Christian must always be *watching* for Christ without regard to the course of this world, whether it is more or less evil. *Lest coming suddenly* even during the lighter or less sinful times of the *even* or *morning* watches, *He find you sleeping* sinfully with the "worldlings."

A Recognizable Voice

The overwhelming passion of the disciple should be to hear the voice of Jesus daily. As the Christian disciple constantly watches for Him to come, he will learn His voice better and better through the practice of listening for it.

When the disciples were commanded to cross the Sea of Galilee in *Mark 6:45*, they immediately complied. While attempting to obey Jesus' command to cross the sea, the wind arose *contrary unto them* (v.48). They were making very slow and agonizing progress until about 3:00 a.m. when they saw Jesus walking on the wind swept and tossed sea near their boat. This sight frightened them and they *cried out* (v.49). Even though they saw Him they nevertheless *were troubled* (v.50); and then Jesus provided what no sight could have brought about. He comforted and assured them that it was He with the recognizable sound of His well-known voice,

And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

Mark 6:50

Notice that Jesus did not say, "I am Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God; and I have everything under My control." But He said simply, *Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid*. He did not have to identify Himself to them because they were well acquainted with His voice. The sound of His voice did what His coming close into view did not do and could not have done. Having become accustomed to His voice, the disciples did not question Who it was that approached them on the sea after they heard Him speak. That is the experience of the Christian who similarly has been watching for Him to return; who has been following hard after Christ; who has been intent upon Him, watching and praying, who has been desirous toward God in the soul. He has strained his every faculty in order not to miss any utterance from Jesus. He thus becomes acquainted with His voice.

The disciple who has succeeded in *watching* as a porter, seeking to hear His voice from heaven signaling His return, will, by that habit, actually hear daily, hourly, constantly, the sweetest voice that a man could hear, the inner voice of the Holy Indwelling Christ. It is that inner voice which brings calm to the troubled sea of tribulations, and even brings joy to troubled hearts,

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me.

And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. *John 10:27, 5*

Watching for Jesus to Return Stimulates Salvation from Sin's Darkness

And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.
[Added emp.] *Mark 13:37*

This warning from Jesus to all men to *Watch* denotes how salvation from the darkness of this world is effected in sinners. It is the responsibility of the porter to *hear* the voice of the master when he knocks. Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners here tells all sinners that they too are to become porters, doorkeepers, listeners for His voice, *I say unto all, Watch*. It is only when Jesus speaks to the heart that any are saved from the darkness. One is saved from sin and its eternal darkness only when one responds to His calling voice.

Listening at the Door

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.

[Added emp.] *Revelation 3:20*

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is [already occurring], when the [spiritually] dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. [Added emp. & amp.]

John 5:24-25

The door to the Easterner's house had no doorknob. Instead, there was a large hole in it. The owner would carry his very large key to the door, put key, hand, and arm through the hole, insert the key in its corresponding lock, and gain entrance. It was just because keys were so large and bulky that the master of the house would not usually carry one with him. He would count on his porter to be near the door, to listen for and recognize his voice, and to unlock the door from the inside. Christ in Revelation and Mark depicts that kind of a porter episode. Christ is the Master and stands outside the door, but He has no key. As a porter, the sinner inside must hear His voice, recognize its tone or inflection as that of the real owner of his house, and open up to Jesus. That is the only way of salvation from the present evil darkness of this world.

But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

John 1:12

In Conclusion

The value of watching for Jesus to return is manifold. Its routine acknowledges His changed position from humiliation to exaltation, and our unchanged position as still in humiliation but governed by love in the mighty hand of God. Its practice secures our success in the use of His authority entrusted to us in the power of the gospel, and in the exercise of the spiritual gifts granted for the edifying of the Body of Christ. It stimulates separation from the darkness of this world's sin through the cultivation of the influences of His lovely voice. And looking for Him to return influences sinners to hear His voice at the door of their lives as He calls them from sin to Himself. Have you heard Him call you?

Finally, watching for Jesus to return involves the fundamental passion of Christian discipleship, which is to be attentive to His voice, whether it comes from above at His return or comes from within at any and every moment of our lives. Knowing and communing with Jesus is the enchantment of the Christian life; and that is the inestimable benefit of watching for Him to return at any moment. Therefore, Watch! Amen.

Jesus' often-repeated instruction to His beloved disciples in His parables is summed up in this succinct and to the point counsel from Him to all men everywhere,

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.