

Watches • Revelation 16:15

INTRODUCTION • Read vs. 12-16 • Foul Ball @ Fenway

1. Some time back I went to see the Red Sox play the Detroit Tigers at Fenway Park in Boston.
2. It's a small park as major league fields go, so they'd constructed extra seating out into foul ball territory.
3. There's a rule spectators at baseball games are supposed to observe: **Watch the game!**
 - a. A foul ball can come off that bat at high speed & go just about anywhere.
 - b. So you're supposed to watch the game.
 - c. Keep your eye on the ball isn't just for the players on the field.
4. So, we were sitting in the stands deep in left field.
 - b. A pitch was delivered and sure enough, the batter hit a foul like a rocket straight at those seats.
 - c. There was a woman about a half dozen rows up sitting w/her back to home plate, chatting w/a friend.
 - d. The ball hit her square in the back of the head, & she dropped like a rock!
 - e. A first aide crew arrived w/a stretcher; they loaded her on & carried her out of the stadium.
 - f. She was out cold!
5. Ever since that night, I tend to pay close attention to what's taking place on the field.

Watch Out!

1. There's a warning repeated often in Scripture: "Watch out!"
2. Look with me here . . .

V. 15

"Behold, [Jesus says] I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

1. As always, we need to understand this warning in its context.
2. This near the end of John's vision of God's last judgments of a horrifying rebellious Earth in the End Times.
3. These judgments are represented by the pouring out of 7 bowls of God's wrath.
 - a. And trust me, that's not the clever name of some kind of hot sauce.
 - 1) I love going to hot sauce stores & reading the labels. There are some funny ones.
 - 2) Scorned Woman Hot Sauce
 - 3) Reaper Hot Sauce
 - 4) Colon Cleanse
 - 5) Habanero Punch
 - 6) Wimp Retardant
 - 7) Armageddon Sauce
 - b. What John sees are 7 angels pouring out 7 wide bowls of God's wrath on a world well-deserving of it.
 - c. It'll be hot, but it won't be sauce.
4. Vs. 12-16 are the 6th bowl, and as we saw last Wednesday, they speak of History's last great Battle = Armageddon.
5. But right in the midst of describing the 6th bowl, John inserts this **seeming interruption**.
6. In fact, let's read the last vs again and leave v. 15 out and you'll see how it flows.
¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. . . . ¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.
7. We'd think v15 should come **after** that; not **before** v16.
8. So, why does it? Why does Jesus have John insert these words here?
9. Simple: He **wants** it to be an interruption!
 - a. He wants us to ask why?
 - b. It's a way to get our attention because what He says is all important.
10. Take careful notice Jesus starts with the same word we saw last week: "Behold!"
 - a. This is something we're to **fix** in our minds & hearts.
 - b. It's supposed to effect **both** the way we think & how we feel.
 - c. We're to **see it** with the eyes of faith = "Behold!"
11. What we're to see is the truth that when He comes, it's as a thief.

- a. The thief doesn't announce himself; unless he's a fool.
 - b. Like the guy who attached a heavy chain to his bumper & the other end around an ATM & tried to yank it out of the wall.
 - 1) What happened is that the ATM didn't move, but the bumper did.
 - 2) The guy drove off, leaving it behind – with his license plate still attached.
 - c. Or how about the burglar who was tired & laid down on the couch for a little snooze.
 - 1) When the owners came home, they found him & called the Police,
 - 2) Who arrive & after waking the guy up, arrested & cuffed him for breaking & entering.
 - d. When Jesus comes, it's like a thief.
13. Now, Jesus must be speaking here of the Rapture.
- a. When He comes in the Second Coming, it won't be as a thief and the world will have plenty of notice things are winding down to the end.
 - b. Conditions will be so bad by the end of the Tribulation, everyone will realize Earth can't have long.
 - c. Jesus said unless He returned there'd be no one left. [Matt 24:22]
14. So when He says He's coming like a thief, He means the Rapture.
15. While John described the very end of the last days in ch16, he knew there'd be many generations of believers who'd read these words before that.
16. So at the Spirit's urging he inserts these words to remind us Jesus could come at any moment.
- a. And if we **don't** make it to the Rapture, as all those previous generations of Christians didn't –
 - b. If Jesus doesn't come for us, then we will go to Him!
 - c. And we need to be ready for that too, because we're not guaranteed we'll all get old and die peacefully in our beds with family gathered round.
 - d. Some die in traffic accidents or job accidents.
 - e. Some die while sitting in their office when a pipe rupture or a plane flies into a tower.
17. Rare is the Sunday I don't stand here realizing while **most** of these faces I see I'm going to see in heaven, it won't be all.
- a. There are people here most Sundays who only come because they have to.
 - b. Parents or a spouse drags them.
 - c. Or they're here because a friend invited them & they're polite, so they came.
 - d. They came because the lost a bet, or a relative is having a child dedicated.
 - e. It's Mother's or Father's Day; whatever.
 - f. Some come because they know they owe it to themselves to at least give religion a try.
 - g. So they come for weeks, & find it mildly interesting, especially all this last days stuff.
 - h. But they balk at pulling the trigger and surrendering to Christ.
18. If that's you; Please listen to what Jesus says: "Behold, I'm coming as a thief."
- a. For some people, His arrival will be a total surprise; & not at all to their liking!
 - b. For those of us who are looking for Christ & paying attention to the times, we expect Him to come at any moment.
 - c. When He **does** come for us, it'll be a surprise, but a super-happy one!
 - d. He won't be a thief to us because He comes to give, not take.
19. While Jesus comes to the lost as a thief, He tells us who follow Him how to be ready.
 "Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."
20. Bev was engaged to Brent.
- a. They made a date for dinner at a nice restaurant. Their reservation was all set for 7 PM.
 - b. But Brent had to work late & called Bev to say he'd be a little late, to wait for him.
 - c. She got there at 7 to keep the reservation.
 - d. At 7:15, Brent was still not there. The seat across from her was empty.
 - e. At 7:20 she started to get a little annoyed.
 - f. At 7:30, annoyance turned to worry.
 - g. Then at 7:35, a tall, dark & handsome hunk asked Bev if she was dining alone.
 - h. She replied she was waiting for her fiancé.
 - i. The man smirked & said, "If I had a girlfriend like you, I'd **never** keeping her waiting," & went back to his place at the bar.

- j. Bev was flustered & watched him walk away.
 - k. Now she's back to annoyance with Brent for being so late and putting her in a situation like that.
 - l. It was obvious the waiter was not happy his table wasn't turning. He was missing out on tips.
 - m. What Bev didn't know was Brent was stuck in a bad traffic snarl & His phone had died.
 - n. He finally arrived at 7:50, apologizing profusely & explaining it all.
 - o. But he had great news. He'd gotten a major promotion at work. And that meant they'd be able to move up their wedding like they hoped.
21. What would have happened if Bev hadn't kept that seat open for Brent?
- a. What if she'd invited the hunk to join her for dinner?
 - b. How embarrassed would she be when Brent arrived?
22. We're the Bride of Christ; betrothed to Him by faith.
- a. He's gone to prepare our wedding chamber.
 - b. Maybe it's taken longer than we'd like & we wonder when He's going to come.
 - c. Don't be fooled by the many babes & hunks the world sends your way wanting to fill the place only Jesus can.
 - d. Wait for Him to gather you into His arms & carry you across the threshold of heaven.
23. Waiting is hard! It's difficult. No one LIKES waiting.
- a. I was thinking about starting a Facebook page called Waiting, but knew I wouldn't get any likes, so I decided to skip it.
 - b. Ever made a call & been put on hold?
 - c. Or you call a help line & a little voice says there are 17 callers ahead of you. OS you have to listen to the abominable Muzak?
 - d. Or how about this: it's 6:20 in the evening & you've just put a piece of steak n your mouth when the phone rings.
 - 1) You chock it down and answer, but there's no reply.
 - 2) So you say again, "Hello!"
 - 3) There's a click & a robo-voice comes on; or someone wants to come out and shampoo your carpet, or get a donation to the American Retired Clown Fund.
 - e. Isn't that moment of silence & waiting after you pick up & say "Hello" ANNOYING?
 - f. I confess, I wait till they start talking, then do the same thing; wait a couple seconds before I say anything. Or I'll just set the phone down and let them talk to the wall.
24. Waiting is not a joy. It's difficult.
25. So Jesus says there's a **blessedness** that comes from waiting & watching.
- "Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."
- a. I've been waiting for the Rapture since the mid-70's when I first learned about it.
 - b. But I've had friends who ***used to be*** eager for it grow cynical about it.
 - c. They mock my belief in Bible prophecy & that Jesus could come at any moment.
 - d. They're not walking with Jesus today. They aren't watching.
26. I don't regret for one moment that I've anticipated the Rapture for 40 yrs.
27. Because this I know: When the trump sounds & we rise – I'll be ready!
28. Jesus tells us **how** we're to watch & be ready By keeping our garments.
- a. A euphemism for our ***morality***.
 - b. When you dress up, you're more careful about your surroundings & actions because you don't want to get anything on your clothes.
 - c. If you're doing yardwork or working in the garage, you put on your grubbies because you expect to get dirty.
 - d. But if you go to something formal like a wedding you dress nice & want to make sure you don't spill anything on yourself.
29. Back in ch3, Jesus said this to the Church at Sardis ...

"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.⁴ You have a few names even in

Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

30. I shared this at the end of the study on Wed. but it's so important, I wanted to repeat it this morning.

31. We know we're saved by the grace of God thru faith, not works.

- a. So there isn't some **work** we could do that would **forfeit** salvation.
- b. The key is faith. We are saved by Grace through Faith.
- c. God's grace flows to & saves us when we believe in Christ.

32. The devil wants to maneuver us into giving up our Faith in Christ.

- a. But he knows a frontal assault rarely works.
- b. A person who falls away doesn't go from spirit-filled believer one day to atheist the next.
- c. The route to a forfeit of faith is most often made by getting a believer to **compromise** w/sin.
- d. It's the proverbial camel's nose in the tent first.
- e. But one compromise leads to another until eventually that person is **addicted** to it.
- f. They get to the point where they **want their sin—more than Christ**,
- g. And turn from Him to unbelief.
- h. This is why you'll find most people who fall away **aren't quiet about it**.
- i. They need to **justify** their rejection of the faith.
 - 1) They go to secular colleges & imbibe the skepticism of the lost.
 - 2) They get a degree in unbelief & go on to write books spewing their apostasy on others looking for a reason to walk away.
- j. The journey to apostasy always begins w/some **little** thing, some tiny spot they allowed to stain them.
- k. But left unchecked, it grows till it turns from a spot to a stain, then into splotch, a hole, a tear.
- l. We're left with shredded rags that fail to cover us – just as Jesus says here.

33. And if the devil can't get a believer to **fall away**, he wants to at least nullify their witness.

- a. What better way than to get them compromised with sin.
- b. The guy wearing dirty, smelly overalls isn't going to sell many tuxedos.
- c. The Compromised Christian isn't going to lead many to Christ.

Abide

1. In 1 John 2:28, John writes ...

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

2. The way to watch & be ready for the Lord's coming is to **abide in Him**.

- a. To **live** in Him, drawing our **strength** from Him.
- b. As a branch draws its life from the vine, we draw ours by abiding in Christ.

3. Let's end there this morning.

- a. What do you **draw life** from?
- b. What **gets you up** in the morning?
- c. What **motivates** you to keep going?

4. Where does your hope lie?

- a. What makes you come most fully alive?
- b. Where's your joy?
- c. What rings your bell & floats your boat?

5. For all of us who take the Name of Christ, it ought to be He.

Give me Jesus. Give me Jesus.
You can have all this world, just give me Jesus.