



## [1 Corinthians 7:35](#)

(35) I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

*New International Version*

One way that some are distracted is by misapplying the concept of watching. In [Luke 21:36](#), [Jesus](#) says, "Watch therefore, and [pray always](#) that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." There are those who believe that this verse instructs us to watch world events and prophecy. Because of that, they spend much time on those subjects, believing that they are properly preparing for the return of our Savior to this earth.

However, when Christ talks about watching, it is all about spiritual preparation, not physical preparation. Why would He change the meaning of "watch" in this one place? The answer is that He does not. Rather, people have added their own private interpretation ([II Peter 1:20](#)) that distracts from the imperative of our Lord's warning.

In [Luke 21:36](#), the word "watch" is the Greek word *agrupneo*, which appears only four times in the New Testament, twice from Christ and twice from Paul. Here are the other three occurrences of *agrupneo* (it is in bold in the verses that follow):

Take heed, **watch** and pray; for you do not know when the time is. ([Mark 13:33](#))

Praying always with all [prayer](#) and supplication in the Spirit, being **watchful** to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—[Ephesians 6:18](#))

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they **watch** out for

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your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with [joy](#) and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. ([Hebrews 13:17](#))

The subject in these three verses is spiritual. [Luke 21:36](#) is no different. Those who misapply [Luke 21:36](#) can become distracted, spending time on the less important and neglecting what is required. It is much like the principle of misplaced priorities that Jesus illustrates in [Matthew 23:23](#): “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and [mercy](#) and [faith](#). These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”

Yes, we should be aware of world events and prophecy, but our greatest energies should be devoted to the far weightier matter of spiritual preparation. What if we died tonight? What value would it be if, after countless hours spent in intensive study year after year, we were right about world events and prophecy but because of inattention we were wrong about the true state of our character ([Revelation 3:17](#))?

If a person were a sentry posted to watch for the enemy from the south, and all his preparations were for an attack from the south, an attack from the north would catch him just as unprepared as those who prepared not at all. For watching to have its benefit, we have to be watching the right thing.

That is the problem with being overly attentive to prophecy: There are many different interpretations from which to choose. At best, all are wrong but one. If we believe one of the many wrong ones, we will be looking in the wrong direction and be blindsided. All the time and effort spent would be for naught, or even worse, if it caused an individual to neglect watching his spiritual condition. It is vital to focus on the latter rather than the former.

— Pat Higgins

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