

THY KINGDOM COME

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Luke 17:20–21 (ESV)

²⁰ *Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, ...*

Today we're in Luke Chapter 17, beginning in v. 20 and Jesus is talking about his Kingdom, and what it means to experience his Kingdom *now* and in the *future*.

So we're talking about the *Kingdom of God*. Here's a simple definition of the Kingdom of God. **The Kingdom of God is the people of God living under the rule of God.** Just that simple. It's God's people living under God's rule and it's really one of the most important things about God's plan - in fact, God's eternal purpose IS *establishing his Kingdom*.

When Jesus taught us to pray, he taught us to pray *thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven*. God's purpose is ultimately found in his Kingdom,

- **In the Garden of Eden**, Adam and Eve experienced God's Kingdom. They were *God's people under God's rule*. They walked and they talked, and they fellowshiped with God - and then sin entered in, and God's Kingdom was disrupted.
- And then God came to **Abraham** and called out Abraham and said *Abraham, I'm going to make you a great nation* and that nation became the nation of Israel. Israel was intended to be God's Kingdom. It was an imperfect presentation of God's Kingdom because of sin and rebellion against God. So God's Kingdom was taken into all types of different directions because of sin, and Israel was split up and dispersed all over the world.
- And then God sent **his son Jesus**, God's perfect son. And Jesus came preaching and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom and he wants you to experience God's Kingdom now in your life - now and forever and ever and ever in eternity. That's why God's Kingdom should be most precious to us.

A family escaped from Europe in the early part of the 20th century came to the United States for safety. The mom and dad struggled to get by. Dad died at an early age, yet the son became quite successful. An so he came to his mom years after she had moved here, and he said *mom, listen, I can afford to send you anywhere. Would you like to go back and travel home to Europe? And would you like to see the world?* She said, *No I don't wanna go anywhere else. I wanna stay right here.*

When she died they discovered that inside her jewelry box was a smaller jewelry box and it was locked. And there was no key, and so they had it drilled open and when they opened it up inside she had put her most treasured possession. It was her United States citizenship papers. Her citizenship was the most precious thing to her.

Well, it's true, United States citizenship is a precious thing, but the most precious thing we can experience is our citizenship in God's Kingdom. It is something for us to treasure and so Jesus talks about God's Kingdom, *God's people living under God's rule, and he talks about God's Kingdom in two different dimensions*. He talks about God's Kingdom in terms of the **now** and then also in the **future**.

And so as we go through this passage, we shall tackle it from those **two perspectives** in the **now** and then in the **future**.

NOW - FIRST of all in the NOW we experience God's Kingdom in the current reign of Jesus.

Look in vv. 20 and 21.

Luke 17:20a (ESV)²⁰ *Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come,*

Why did the Pharisees ask Jesus this question?

Because the Pharisees, like most Jewish people of Jesus' day, we're looking for the Messiah to come and to overthrow the Roman government and to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel.

When Jesus came and proclaimed to be the Messiah, and yet he came serving and performing miracles and yet not overthrowing the government, it made them wonder *Well, is he really the Messiah?* In fact they ultimately rejected him as Messiah because he didn't establish God's Kingdom the way they thought.

But here's the answer he gave, he answered them, ***The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed,***

Verse 20. *Nor will they say, look here it is, or there for behold, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you,* (in another place Jesus says *the Kingdom is IN YOU.*)

Jesus said the Kingdom of God is not some *institution* you can see. It's not in some *miraculous sign* that someone does. Instead, Jesus was saying the Kingdom of God had come in a Person and that person was *in their midst* and that person was HIM! *And HIS Kingdom is in those who acknowledge His rule and reign in their lives.*

He will then goes on to say that there is a future Kingdom coming someday, and it's even greater, better more glorious than anything they were hoping for. We'll get to that.

But first, if you want to experience God's Kingdom right now, then let Jesus Christ be ruler and king and Master and Lord of your life. When he is ruling, you're experiencing the Kingdom of God. And **his Kingdom only comes when you come to him through repentance and faith.**

Nicodemus was one of the Pharisees and and he had real questions, genuine questions about Jesus.

In John 3 we read that Nicodemus came to Jesus in the cover of darkness, when none of the other Pharisees would know what was happening.

And Jesus said to Nicodemus *Truly. Truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water in the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

How do you enter the Kingdom of God? It's not by being a part of an institution. It's not by having your name on the list somewhere. It's not by being a member of a church. It's not by being a part of a certain nationality. The only way you can enter the Kingdom of God is to experience a spiritual Rebirth. To be *born again*. That happens when to turn from your sin and to turn to Jesus, and by faith to trust him as your Savior and to follow him as your Lord and King. And when you do that, you enter the Kingdom of God.

And when that happens, then your life as a believer should reflect the Kingdom of God that you are part of.

It should change your life accordingly.

Heard a story that a missionary told that helped me to think about what the Kingdom of God is right now. This missionary who spent time on the borderland between Laos and Vietnam. Said that hundreds of years ago there were, there were border disputes and it was almost impossible to tell in that border region who was Laotian and who was Vietnamese? And so the leaders of Laos and Vietnam were trying to decide, who *belonged to which Kingdom?* They couldn't tell by location or by race, they couldn't tell by last names.

And so they made a determination based on this. They said *if you lived in a house up on stilts and if you decorated your house with serpents like they did in India, and if you ate long grain rice, then you were considered Laotian.* And you paid your taxes to the King of Laos.

If on the other hand, you lived in that same region, maybe next door to the house I just described, but *your house was on the ground and you decorated using Chinese Dragons and you ate short grain rice, then you were considered Vietnamese* and you paid your taxes to the Vietnamese king.

It wasn't based on *where you lived*. It wasn't based on your *last name*. It wasn't based on your *family*. It was based on how you lived your life.

When Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning in your life as your king, he will change the way you live your life. **And so I asked you today, has Jesus Christ changed the way you live your life?** If he hasn't, you really need to ask yourself the question, *Is Jesus Christ my king? Has Jesus Christ changed our family? Is Jesus Christ working in our church?* Because when Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning, he changes everything.

And so he talks about his Kingdom and it's current reign in our lives.

FUTURE KINGDOM (Now - THEN)

Then secondly, Jesus talks about God's Kingdom in the

not yet – the coming Kingdom – when Jesus comes back to earth (second coming).

Luke 17:22–24 (ESV)

²² And he said **to the disciples**, “**The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.** ²³ **And they will say to you, ‘Look, there!’ or ‘Look, here!’ Do not go out or follow them.** ²⁴ **For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.**

SUMMARY

It's important before we move on any further, to just take a moment to distinguish between two important teachings in the scripture. When the Bible talks about the things leading up to the coming future Kingdom, it talks about both the REMOVAL of the Church and the Bible talks about the RETURN of Jesus Christ. Those two things are related to one another. These are also called the RAPTURE and the SECOND COMING of Christ.

Sometimes they are talked about together in scripture, sometimes in separate passages, but they are actually two distinct things that will happen at the end of the age.

I want you to hear a little bit about this just to set the table for what we're going to read.

The REMOVAL or rapture (snatching up) of the church will occur when Jesus Christ comes in the air, and believers who are alive will be raptured, snatched up, or taken up to be with him, and believers who are dead will come out of their graves (receive resurrection bodies). The Bible describes that in the book of **1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (ESV)** *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ¹⁷ *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.*

That's the Removal or Rapture of the church. Jesus Christ will resurrect dead believers and catch up living believers.

Among Bible believing Christians and teachers, the timing of when this event occurs is variously understood.

- Some believe the Bible teaches that following the rapture of the church, there will be a time (7 years) of intense Tribulation on the earth. During that time will be worldwide evil and a Satan-empowered ruler, that the Bible calls the *Man of Sin* or the *Beast* or the *Antichrist*, will rise to power that all of the world will come to worship as God. At the end of that time he will be defeated by Jesus with one word from His mouth. And at that time, Jesus will *come again* to the earth - the Second Coming of Christ and establish His Kingdom.

- And some people think that Jesus will return for His church at the middle of that tribulation period.
- And some people believe he'll return at the very end, so that that the Rapture and the return of Christ will happen one right after the other.

Personally, I lean toward the first view, but can I just say, real seriously, that people who have the same level of conviction about Scripture as I do/you do can wind up in differing positions on these things.

But on this we agree. We agree Jesus will come for His church and then Jesus Christ will return to Earth to bring this world to a conclusion and to usher in at His Coming Kingdom, a *New Heaven and New Earth*. Hallelujah! And all God's people said. Amen.

So, my suggestion - I would not be worried about the specific details. If it was that important to know, God would have made it clear. It focuses on our being ready now.

BACK TO THE TEXT

So this passage of scripture is describing Jesus Christ coming to Earth to judge and to rule and to establish his Kingdom on earth.

I want you to notice several things Jesus tells us about the return of Jesus Christ and God's Kingdom.

I. HIS RETURN WILL BE, FIRST OF ALL, UNMISTAKABLE. vv. 22-24

Look in verse 22 of the text. The Bible says *then Jesus said to the disciples*. Before Jesus was talking to the Pharisees who asked the question. Now he's talking to who His disciples, those who follow him, who have his Kingdom in them, because they are following Jesus.

Jesus said to the disciples, the days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the son of man and you will not see it, In other words, the world is going to become so evil, so wicked and the pressure from Satan is going to become so great, and sin is going to become so oppressive that you will be longing and longing to see the return of Jesus Christ.

Now there are times we feel that way today. We look at the world around us and we say, *Lord, please come*.

And yet Jesus says *you'll long to see it and you will not see it*.

Verse 23. *And they will say to you 'look there' or 'look here,' do not go out or follow them for as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the son of man be in his day.* He says when you are looking and longing for Jesus to come, He said there will be those who come and say, *"Look there"* or *"look here."* In other words, *false prophets or false prophecy teachers* will say, *"Hey, let me tell you something. Nobody else can see this, but I see it and I want to show it to you. Jesus is coming or has come. Or he's almost here and you can see it - here it is, right here."* He said, *"When they say 'look here,*

look there," that's not it."

So here's a word. Anytime you hear somebody say that they've got some secret knowledge about the coming of Jesus Christ, they've seen something in Scripture that nobody else has ever seen before (secret date) and they're going to show it to you – *"that NOT it."* Do not go out or follow them **because Jesus says when his coming comes it will be un-Mistakable.**

V.24 *For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the son of man be in his day.* It's like lightning flashing.

I read a story about a guy in Pennsylvania. In 2009 John Lamey was taking a shower, and suddenly lightning hit his house, ran through the water system. It ran into his shower. It hit him and knocked him unconscious. And his son had to come and pull him out of the tub to keep him from drowning.

Six years later, he was washing dishes and once again lightning hit his house, ran through the water system, hit him while he was there, knocked him unconscious again!

He doesn't remember anything that happened either time lightning struck him. But he's sure about this - Lightning struck Him! You don't make a mistake when lightning strikes. You know it hit.

Here's what Jesus says. When He returns to judge the earth and to rule as king over all the earth, it will be unmistakable. it will be unmistakable *as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the son of man be in his day.*

In **Revelation 1:7**. The Bible says this. *Behold he is coming with clouds and every eye will see him.* When he comes, it will be unmistakable.

II. SECONDLY, WHEN HE COMES, HIS RETURN WILL BE SUDDEN. vv. 25-31

When Jesus comes to earth to rule and to reign as king, his coming will be sudden. That's in **verse 26** of the text. But first don't miss this. First, in **v.25** Jesus said *the son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation*. In other words, before Jesus Christ comes to rule and to reign, He went to the Cross of Calvary. He was rejected by that generation. They nailed him to the cross of Calvary. He bled and died for our sins. He rose from the grave. He ascended to the Father. That was why he came the first time. That's what we needed to enter into His Kingdom. Don't reject Him like they did. Receive Him...

And now, no specific prophecy has to happen next before He comes, first for his church and then to rule and to reign as King in residence. And when he comes, his coming will be sudden.

Now look in **verse 26** Jesus uses two different Old Testament events to describe the suddenness of his coming.

He says, *just as it was in the days of Noah. So will it be in the days of the sun of man?* Then look down in **verse 28**,

he says *likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot* and then down in **verse 30**. *So it will be on the day when the son of man is revealed.*

He compares the suddenness of his coming to the time when Noah built the Ark and Lot and his family escaped Sodom and Gomorrah.

Notice what the Bible says about the days of Noah, he says *in the days of Noah, verse 27, they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving and being given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the Ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.*

They were just going about their business. Just living their lives, eating, drinking, marrying, being given in marriage, and then the day came when Noah entered that Ark and the flood came and destroyed everyone,

He said it was the same thing *in the days of Lot*. Lot and his family lived in the evil city of Sodom, a place where they not only tolerated sin, they normalized sin. They celebrated sin.

I know what you're thinking when I say that. You're thinking, "*That's where we find ourselves today.*" In so many ways, that's true. That's how it was in Lot's day.

Similarly to what was said of Noah's day we find again in **Luke 17:28-30** (ESV) ²⁸ *Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,* ²⁹ *but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—* ³⁰ *so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

I want you to notice something here. Both for those in the days of Noah and the days of lot. **It came SUDDENLY, but it did not come WITHOUT WARNING.**

Follow me carefully here. **it came suddenly, but it did not come without warning.**

There was a long time of warning. All the time while Noah was building that Ark he warned that a flood was coming. God warned the people of Sodom and Gomorrah before he rained down fire and brimstone on them.

There was warning, but when the judgment came, it came SUDDENLY. Looking **verse 31**. Jesus says this on that day when He comes to judge, *let the one who is on the housetop with his goods in the house not come down, to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.* In other words, when judgment comes, it will come so suddenly it will be too late to do anything else.

How many of us have not seen some sort of documentary about the city of Pompeii. It's was completely destroyed when Mount Vesuvius erupted shortly after the time when the New Testament was written.

When that volcano violently erupted and it rained down volcanic ash on Pompeii so suddenly that the people were frozen in their tracks.

And you can see the people even now, frozen in time,

doing what they were doing when it suddenly happened.

It came suddenly, BUT it did not come without warning.

There were earthquakes ahead of time. There was smoke coming out of that mountain ahead of time. And then the explosion came and destruction followed.

When Jesus Christ returns, he will return suddenly and it will be too late. **The warning time is NOW.** God is warning you today! He actually put it in writing – this Bible.

When people want to assurance they say "will you put it in writing." God put it in writing.

If you haven't turned to Him and trusted Him to forgive you and include you in His Kingdom, you should do it now! Because when he comes, it will be too sudden. Too late. Turn to him now.

His coming will be unmistakable. His return will be sudden.

III. AND THEN THIRDLY, HIS RETURN WILL BE DECISIVE. VV.32-37

He now goes back to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and he takes us to Lot's wife. Jesus says in **verse 32**, *remember Lot's wife*. Apparently, she loved Sodom. Everything she knew was there. Her home was there. All of her things were there. And when the Angel came and took her by the hand and began to take her and her family out of that city, he said to her, *don't look back*. But the Bible tells us in **Genesis 19, verse 26**, that she paused for a moment and she looked back. And the Bible says. *She was turned into a pillar of salt*. And she died on the spot.

Why? Lot's wife was Indecisive. When Jesus Christ returns, it will be a *decisive moment*. Look in **verse 33**. Jesus says *whoever seeks to preserve his life*, and he's speaking in the present tense. If this life is everything to you, or you're indecisive about this, you'll *lose your life*.

But whoever loses his life, whoever gives himself over to God's Kingdom and says, *Jesus, I want you to rule and reign in my life. Whoever loses his life, he'll keep it.*

And then Jesus talks about the decisiveness of his return, he says. **Luke 17:34-35** (ESV) ³⁴ *I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left.* ³⁵ *There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left."*

A decisive moment. And then also notice, for some it happens *at night*. But for some it will happen *in the daytime* *two women will be grinding together* (grinding wheat). What? Why? Because this is a global event! It's happening all over the globe at the same time.

And then Jesus disciples said to him, *where Lord?* And he said to them, *where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.*

That's an ancient proverb and it's quite cryptic. I've read several possible interpretations. It probably means this. Where there is death, destruction will come. Where there is

spiritual death, where there is turning away from God, and spiritual death, destruction and judgment will come.

CONCLUSION

Jesus tells us that a future Kingdom is coming, He is coming. And when it happens it will be unmistakable, sudden and decisive.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

So why is this important to us? It must be because although *the Pharisees* brought up the question, and, yes, He answered to correct their mistaken beliefs, BUT then turned *to His disciples* and told them these things about the His Kingdom Coming.

Obviously, it's not for us to speculate on the date – although many do that – he warned us not to go there.

1. Because establishing His Kingdom is at the center of God's eternal plan from the very beginning, and He wants us to be on board with that.
2. Because everyone, even us Disciples of Jesus, do better (more motivated) *when we know there's something greater ahead*, and there is.

Just as a student *powers on* with his/her courses/studies when it's hard because they know if they do they will get a degree, and that degree will open doors and give them opportunities. So we follow Christ's rule because we inherit an eternal kingdom.

(keep eye on the prize)

3. Because NOW is the time to get ready, be ready because it will be too late to decide to turn to Him or serve Him when He actually returns - that's why it's so important that you decide and trust him now.

[Be Ready, Be Busy, Be Faithful...]

Dear Jesus. I know I am a Sinner. I know you are the Savior. Right now I turn from my sin and I turn to you in faith. Forgive me and make me Yours. Be my Savior and my Lord forever. Amen.