

**Message #83****Luke 17:20-37**

A few weeks ago, we received an email from a Jewish man who commended us for our study of the history and importance of Israel. This man and his wife are actually heading to Israel and he thanked us and said this series is so “Biblical and educational.”

The reason why we are studying these things is because Israel is the most important nation on the face of this earth. Israel and Israel alone is the covenant nation of God and the entire prophetic plan of God is centered on her.

In 1948, when the British government gave Israel her land and she was established as a nation, it was a major turning point in the prophetic program of God. God had promised in many passages that He was going to begin to bring back a scattered Israel to her land and 1948 was a beginning. Dr. John Walvoord said, “The fact that in our day there is again movement and development in relation to this ancient nation is a sign that the stage is being set for the final world drama.”

The prophetic signs developed in the New Testament, generally speaking, are for Israel and not the Church. We are seeing some clouds forming that would indicate we are nearing these signs.

We are looking for and longing for the imminent return of Jesus Christ. We are not looking for the specific signs but there will be specific signs that will take place just before the coming of Jesus Christ to reign as King in Israel’s land. Those signs will chronologically occur just prior to the reign of Jesus Christ as King and just prior to Jesus Christ establishing His Jewish Kingdom.

It has been a while since we have been in Luke, but we may remember that Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem and He is being dogged by religious hypocrites—the Pharisees and Scribes.

In fact, **Verse 20** sets the stage for this entire context. Jesus was being questioned by the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to know when God would establish the Kingdom for Israel on earth. They did not believe in Christ but they were always trying to trip Him or trap Him.

The Pharisees wanted Jesus to tell them exactly when it would be that Israel will get her land. They do not like the fact that the Romans are dominating them and they want Jesus to tell them exactly when this is going to stop. **God’s King and God’s reign was right there in front of them. They were as blind as bats and could not see it.**

The truth is, the Pharisees will never understand the prophetic truth of God. However, Jesus decided to take this question and teach His disciples the truth about the coming Kingdom. What He teaches them is this:

**GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO RECOGNIZE AND UNDERSTAND PROPHETIC TRUTH REGARDING GOD’S FUTURE PROGRAM AND KINGDOM.**

God wants His people to understand Biblical prophecy. He wants them to know and recognize and understand the events that have to do with His first coming and the signs that will lead to His second coming:

In this passage there are five prophetic realities that Jesus Christ reveals:

**PROPHETIC REALITY #1** – God’s Kingdom is first internal before it is external. **17:20-21**

This is something Israel has missed and they still don’t get this today. Frankly, this is where we are right now. The Kingdom work of God is first going to be and is spiritual before it is physical. The key to the Kingdom of God was right here on earth in Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees were interested in getting into the physical kingdom, in which Israel dominated the world. This is what is predicted to happen. Israel will one day be the great nation of God and all the nations of the world will realize that. That is what the Pharisees wanted Jesus to do. The problem is before she could get into that Kingdom she needed to be cleansed of her sin and the One who could do that was right there in Person.

Jesus brings out three prophetic facts that would have shattered their dreams:

**Prophetic Fact #1** - The Kingdom will not at first be physically observable. **17:20**

Jesus had performed some amazing physical miracles proving who He was but the Pharisees still wanted more proof. **Christ said you need to understand you need to accept Me spiritually before you will get into the Kingdom physically.** Jesus basically said I am not doing any more signs for you to observe. He had already done many.

**Prophetic Fact #2** - The Kingdom will not at first be physically locatable. **17:21a**

**Jesus said the Kingdom of God at this time is not here or there, it is in Him.** Wherever or in whomever Jesus is present, God’s Kingdom is right there. In other words, at the time Christ was here, you could not say look, the Kingdom is over there or it is over here, because the key to getting into the Kingdom was Him. He is the Kingdom of God.

**Prophetic Fact #3** - The Kingdom of God will first be spiritually internal. **17:21b**

Christ says the Kingdom is right now in your “midst.” In other words, I am here and I am the one who can give you entrance into the Kingdom and make it possible for you to get into it.

Think of this. Here was Jesus Christ, the God/Savior/Messiah/King right there in Person in their midst and they missed it. They couldn’t see it. They didn’t get it.

This principle is not just for Israel. There are many religious people who actually believe going to heaven is by one's physical works. You will never get to heaven by your physical works; it is first internal before it is external. You must have Christ in your life.

**PROPHETIC REALITY #2** – God's physical Kingdom will come when Jesus Christ physically comes back from Heaven. **17:22-25**

Christ was physically here on earth and His disciples could be confused about Kingdom timing. **So Jesus spoke directly to His disciples.** The Pharisees are no longer the focal point of His address. He wanted His disciples to know five prophetic facts about this event:

**Prophetic Fact #1** - Christ will physically return after a long period of time. **17:22**

Trent Butler wrote something that really hit true; He said Jesus wanted to make certain His disciples realized that before this Kingdom would be established they would have a "long wait" (*Luke*, p. 282). Things will become so desperate that Israel will want to see Jesus Christ again. These disciples would not live to see it.

There will come a time when the nation Israel will long to see Jesus Christ again. There will be an interval of a long time between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. It has been an interval of a very long time. It has been nearly 2,000 years since Christ left. If we date His leaving around AD 33, then it has been about 1967 years since Christ left.

**Prophetic Fact #2** - Christ will physically return after the rising of many false prophets. **17:23**

When things don't happen as quickly as possible, people can become jumpy and they tend to gravitate to false things. People have a religious bent and they tend to gravitate to false teachers and false teaching.

There have been many false prophets who have continually existed connected to Israel. It has been estimated that there have been over 1,100 religious leaders in various parts of the world in the last 50 years who have claimed to be the Messiah. Jesus says reject them all.

Probably the most notorious false prophet is Muhammad. He was a rapist who literally took young girls and forced them into sex slavery. He was a killer, a thief, and an adulterer.

A couple of years ago, on southbound Interstate 465 near Indianapolis, a Billboard was posted that told six facts about Muhammad: 1) Married a 6-year-old; 2) Slave owner and slave dealer; 3) Rapist; 4) Beheaded 600 Jews in one day; 5) Had 13 wives, 11 at one time; 6) Tortured and killed unbelievers. That Billboard caused quite a stir because it told the truth about perhaps the most famous false prophet in history.

Just before Christ returns there will be an increase of false prophets. They will multiply like Satanic rabbits all over the world. There will only be 144,000 plus two prophets that we know of on this earth who will actually know and communicate truth.

I think it is significant that when the Apostle Peter discussed this in the church age, he said, “But false prophets also arose among the people just as there will be also false teachers among you” (II Pet. 2:1). In this church age, the main opposition to God’s truth is not a false prophet, but false teachers and false teaching.

**Prophetic Fact #3** - Christ will physically return in great glory from the sky. **17:24**

Jesus wants His disciples to understand the next time I come it will not be some “secret appearance.” Jesus is not going to appear before a few when He comes again; He will come in a “sudden, eye-catching glory.” No one will have to look for His coming; it will be visibly spectacular.

Jesus makes it very clear that one day He will return in the sky to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The sky will light up. His return will be fully announced by the heavenlies.

Notice the title He uses concerning Himself—“Son of Man” which is the Daniel, Ancient of Days title that refers to the Divine God who will one day rule over all people in the world and all nations.

When we did the special prophecy series on-line, we got a very nice note from a man who followed the whole thing and loved it. He asked a question in the one about the second coming of Jesus Christ and that was how could everyone in the world actually see Christ? Well weird things will happen with the sun and moon that will cause everyone everywhere to look up and probably what will happen is that Jesus Christ and the procession will circle the earth. Just as you look up in the sky and see a jet on its way to its destination, so you will look up and see Jesus Christ on His way to Jerusalem.

**Prophetic Fact #4** - Christ will physically return after Christ’s sufferings. **17:25a**

One of the arguments that Jews have used to say that Jesus is not the Messiah, is that He suffered and died and did not conquer. Well Jesus chronologically taught His disciples that a critical part of His Messiah-ship is that He would first suffer and die and then leave and then come back.

In fact, it was clearly predicted in the O.T. that this is what would precisely happen to the Messiah. Psalm 22 starts out with the very words He would cry out on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” The Psalm says, “He would have His hands and feet pierced” (22:16). Then, later in the Psalm, after He had died, we read, “For the kingdom is the LORD’S and He rules over the nations...all...will bow before Him” (22:28-29). So the Bible clearly predicted that the Messiah would suffer before He would reign. Isaiah 53 says exactly the same thing.

He would suffer and be cut off from the land of the living for our transgressions and then He would come back and reign over all. Jesus is fulfilling exactly what the O.T. said the Messiah was to do.

**Prophetic Fact #5** - Christ will physically return after Israel's rejection. **17:25b**

Jesus makes it clear that the generation that was alive when He was here would reject Him. They would be the ones who would kill Him. The truth is, even to this very day, most Jews reject the fact that Jesus Christ is her Messiah.

**PROPHETIC REALITY #3** – God's physical Kingdom will come when the world reaches a judgment level of corruption. **17:26-30**

There are two descriptions and illustrations given by Jesus Christ that describe the way it will be when He returns.

He brings out two major episodes from history that were a prelude to the ferocious judgment of God.

**Illustration #1** - Just before Christ returns, the world will be like it was in the days of Noah.  
**17:26-27**

When we carefully examine details at the time of Noah, we may make six observations:

**(Observation #1)** - It was a time of an immoral invasion of Satan and demons. **Gen. 6:2, 4**

Satan and demon activity was really on the rise in the days of Noah. Satan and his demons were responsible for intense activity and a worldwide promotion of immorality. It was so bad that God was sorry He had even made human beings.

**(Observation #2)** - It was a time when the majority people were enjoying life not thinking about God. **Luke 17:27**

The vast majority of people had no fear of God. In fact, they were eating and drinking and marrying without any thought we are soon to face the judgment of God. God was the farthest thing on their minds.

**(Observation #3)** - It was a time of terrible, continual evil. **Gen. 6:5**

Moses described that time in Genesis as being a time when every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually. No matter what people thought about, it was always evil. So not matter what the subject, no one ever thought in a way that was right before God.

**(Observation #4)**- It was a time when the majority of people had no fear or reverence of God. **II Pet. 2:5; I Pet. 3:20**

The world was an ungodly world. In the days of Noah, people were ungodly and disobedient and had no fear of God.

**(Observation #5)** - It was a time after there had been proclaimed prophetic warnings.

**Heb. 11:7; II Pet. 2:5**

The days of Noah cannot refer to unexpected judgment because Noah proclaimed the judgment of God was coming all the while he built the ark. Noah warned everyone for years. He preached that people needed to get right with God for somewhere near 120 years. People heard the warnings and did nothing about it. That is what life was like in the days of Noah.

**(Observation #6)** - It was a time of swift, irreversible, unstoppable, total judgment.

**Gen. 7:21-23**

When the judgment of God came, it was too late to repent. God destroyed everything and everyone. You could not stop it and you could not reverse it.

Jesus Christ says here that is the way it will be just before I return the second time. It will be just like it was in the days of Noah.

**Illustration #2** - Just before Christ returns, the world will be like it was in the days of Lot.

**17:28-30**

This is what Jesus Christ is saying. First, look at things in the days of Noah and then look at how it was in the days of Lot. Now if we go back to the days of Lot, there are six observations we may also make:

**(Observation #1)** - It was a time when homosexuality was publicly promoted and flaunted.

**Gen. 19:4-5**

Homosexuality was so dominant that if men had a choice between having intimacy with a beautiful girl versus a man, the men would choose the men. Homosexuality was not hidden, it was flaunted. Just before God destroyed the cities, that is what life was like. Jesus said just before God destroys the world, that is what life will be like—just like the days of Lot.

**(Observation #2)** - It was a time when the majority of people were enjoying life and not

thinking about God. **Luke 17:28a**

The vast majority of people in the days of Lot were not thinking about God and His judgment. They were enjoying life. They were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building. No one was talking seriously about God and His coming judgment, they were living life with no fear of God whatsoever. Jesus says that is the way it will be just before I return.

**(Observation #3)** - It was a time of great economic growth and expansion. **Luke 17:28b**

When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, life in those cities was good. There was prosperity and expansion and growth. These cities were very prosperous; they prospered at the greatest level.

**(Observation #4)** - It was a time when the majority of people had no fear or reverence of God. Gen. **19:30**

Once judgment hit, there was great fear of God but before it hit, there was no fear of God. Even Lot's own wife did not take the word of God seriously.

**(Observation #5)** - It was a time of very little prophetic warning. Gen. **19:15, 22**

When judgment came it came ferocious and fast. That is the way it will work just before Jesus Christ returns. God's Tribulation judgment and wrath will be fast and furious.

**(Observation #6)** - It was a time of swift, unexpected, unstoppable, total judgment. Gen. **19:24-25**

Now these are specific signs that will be seen in the Tribulation just before Christ's physical return to earth to establish His Kingdom for Israel.

Now there are some questions we need to ask in view of this. We know before the Tribulation begins, there will be the Rapture of the Church so if we see these things taking shape, we know we must be nearing the Rapture

- 1) Is there a rise of immoral activity and a rise of that which is Satanic or demonic?
- 2) Do the vast majority of people seem to be focused on enjoying life and not God?
- 3) Are we able to observe that our world is getting more evil?
- 4) Do we see a major increase and promotion of homosexuality?
- 5) Do the majority of people lack a fear and reverence for God?
- 6) Do most people give themselves to a life of pleasure and leisure?
- 7) Has there been time in which prophetic warnings have been proclaimed?

These are very objective questions and the answer to those questions would indicate we are very near the Rapture of the Church.

Two points we want to observe about these two illustrations:

- 1) We mentioned the dominant sins but the text did not. Dominant sin made the people completely oblivious to righteousness and threat of judgment.
- 2) In both illustrations, the righteous people were removed before the wrath came.

God's people can live in a very corrupt and godless world but through faith in Jesus Christ, they will escape eternal destruction.

**PROPHETIC REALITY #4** – God's physical Kingdom will come with a swift, complete, devastating judgment. **17:31-36**

Christ wanted His disciples to realize that God's judgment will eventually come and it will not be the normal day. It will be fast and it will be fierce. It will not come in peacefully, but ferociously.

There are two prophetic facts revealed:

**Prophetic Fact #1** - The only chance for survival will be immediate exit. **17:31-33**

Jewish people need to know this. Just prior to the return of Jesus Christ, Jews will need to get out of Jerusalem. The believing Jews will immediately flee the area realizing what is about to happen (Matt. 24:15-21).

There will be 144,000 Jewish men who will have communicated this point as well as two prophets who actually lived in Jerusalem (Rev. 7, 11, 14).

Jesus says during this time you will not be able to protect yourself. If you try to save your own life you will be destroyed; if you trust me to save your life you will live.

There is rich theology here.

**Prophetic Fact #2** - The salvation and the judgment will separate even the closest of human relationships. **17:34-36**

Salvation and destruction are individual matters. When judgment comes:

- 1) It will separate sleeping partners. **17:34**
- 2) It will separate working partners. **17:35-36**

The fact that Christ may come when people are sleeping or working, means it could be day or night. It will be one of those two in various parts of the world when He comes. Whenever the moment occurs, there will be a great separation of those who are right with God and those who are not.

It will be a permanent separation.

**PROPHETIC REALITY #5** – God’s physical Kingdom will come to a specific location and People. **17:37**

The Pharisees wanted to know when this would happen and the disciples wanted to know where this would happen. Jesus said you don’t need to know when and you don’t need to know where. Just know this; it will happen where the body is located.

Jesus Christ will specifically return to the very spot where the nations are gathered against Israel. The specific spot will be just outside of Jerusalem.

The vast majority of people believe that they can physically do something to get into eternity. There is only one way in, believe in Jesus Christ and God’s Kingdom will be yours.