

Scripture Reading:

Luke 17:20-37 “Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." 22 Then [Jesus] said to the disciples, "The days will come 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 here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. 24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34 I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36 Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." 37 And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.'”

"The Day of the Lord"

This morning we come to one of those passages with several verses that usually causes nothing but confusion and arguments over “the last days.” To properly understand these verses, it is important that we see them in their proper context:

- Both the broader context of Luke’s orderly account and the specific context of the Pharisees bringing yet another question.

Luke is presenting a very simple but profound message for his friend Theophilus:

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins
- These people will become His Church, the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ
- This Church will carry the Kingdom of God to the four corners of the earth

These are the overriding themes from the Angels proclaiming the Good News in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel until we find Paul teaching about the Kingdom in the final verses of Acts! Now we need to understand that the word "Kingdom" is used OVER three hundred times in the Bible!

We have often turned to Daniel chapter two for the proper understanding of how all these references to Kingdoms fit together in God's plan. As Daniel describes the King's dream, we read in, 2:34 "You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, *[that would be Jesus!]*

"You watched while a stone was cut without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces." *[that would be the Kingdoms of this world]*

35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

[and that would be the Kingdom of Christ!]

Lest there be any doubt, Daniel says it plainly as he interprets the dream: "44 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ... The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

The Apostle Paul also assures us that the Kingdom of Christ will fill the earth in Corinthians 15 when he says, 23: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." *[His 2nd coming at the end of history]*

"Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father AFTER destroying every rule and every authority and power."

Please note that the Son's Kingdom is presented to the Father AFTER the Great Commission has been carried out and the fullness of the Gentiles have been brought in!

"For [Jesus] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

Again, note that the LAST enemy to be destroyed is death which will occur at the Second Coming of Christ and the White Throne judgment where we are told Revelation 20:13 that,

"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

These are Luke's broad themes... Here in Chapters 17 & 18 Jesus is on His final journey to Jerusalem and it is also important to note the immediate context of these verses: The Pharisees come with a question which Jesus quickly answers, but then He turns to His disciples with three very important lessons:

- **Remember the Kingdom of God**
- **Remember to be persistent in prayer**
- **Remember to be humble**

These will be our lessons for the next three weeks & we MUST remember that ALL three relate to the simple question asked by the Pharisees: "When will the Kingdom of God Come?"

- **Keeping all this in mind, let's dig into our text for this morning:**

Commentators spend a lot of time talking about the attitude with which this question was asked and why it was asked, but the text is silent on these points and focuses on how Jesus answered the question: "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

That is a straight forward answer for the Pharisees who were looking for a military Messiah to conquer Rome & to make them His special lieutenants! These false shepherds of Israel should have reflected on the lessons Jesus has been teaching since He first read from the Book of Isaiah at the beginning of His public ministry: How the Messiah has come to save His people from their sins, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. How God's salvation is ALL of grace and that our works earn us nothing Salvation is the exchange of a heart of stone for a heart of flesh & that is NOT something that can be observed!

- **Jesus then turns to the Disciples and begins to teach three important lessons they need to understand about the Kingdom they are to serve in, as do we!**

Again we should note that Jesus uses this question from the Pharisees as a good "teaching opportunity."

22 Then He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it."

Jesus explains this in more detail at the Last Supper: He will no longer be with them after His ascension. By then He will have explained to them in more detail the coming destruction of Jerusalem but as the years pass waiting for the Day of the Lord they will long to be with Jesus!

23 "And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them."

Here Jesus warns them NOT to be distracted but to wait for the sure signs He has given them.

24 “For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.”

We will discuss this in much more detail when we come to the final discourses of Jesus in Jerusalem, but for today we need to remember that the image of lightning demonstrates God’s presence and a coming in judgment: This time Jerusalem! But this is not the final discourse that Jesus will give so He quickly reminds them what must take place first... Jesus must save His people from their sins:

“25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”

Then Jesus goes on to explain some of the things they will see after Pentecost and before the final judgment of the nation of Israel:

26 “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

Those who want to put the days of the son of man or the Day of the Lord in the future have to completely ignore how Peter quoted the prophet Joel on the day of Pentecost as he explained what was going on:

Acts 2:16 “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, [*does that phrase sound familiar?*]

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, & the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

[*Joel mentions the “Day of the Lord FIVE times! Your homework]*

- Here the Day of the Lord is NOT a day far in the future but a day that would come in that generation!

Thus Jesus reminds the disciples who would be commissioned to preach the Good News in verse 21, “And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The point of using the example of Noah is that folks just kept on living their lives EVEN though Noah preached about the coming judgment and they could not miss the image of the massive boat being built!

Jesus then reminds them of one more Old Testament example:

28 “Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29 but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven & destroyed them all. 30 Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

Jesus begins to show the disciples that the judgment was going to come swiftly and instructs them on what they should do when they see the signs of His coming:

31 “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.”

Jesus brings many of the lessons He has been teaching to bear here because of how important it is that the disciples understand!

- **In the end they did, with history recording that no Christians were lost in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70!**

Jesus had reminded his followers that they must count the cost, that they must serve God rather than money and that they must be willing to hate mother & father, son & daughter and even husband or wife. Jesus had said He did not come to bring peace but a sword, judgment that would divide and that is the picture Jesus gives next:

34 “I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35 Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36 Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left.”

- **The disciples have a LOT to take in & so they have a question:**

37 “And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?" So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles [or vultures] will be gathered together.””

They ask where all of this is going to take place because they do not yet grasp that it is the nation of Israel itself that is to be judged. Jesus will have more lessons to teach on this, but I think that John Calvin has it right in describing how and why Jesus answers the way He does: Jesus uses the common example of birds flocking to a carcass that will be their meal to illustrate that the disciples need to stay close to their real nourishment: Jesus Himself!

- **That is certainly a lesson we should follow in all ages!**

BUT other than this wise counsel what are the lessons we are to learn here?

The Pharisees brought up the Kingdom, and Jesus takes the opportunity to teach some important lessons, not only for the Disciples but for all of us:

- **We must remember that the Kingdom of Christ has come!**
- **We must remember to be persistent in our prayers, especially ‘Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven**
- **And finally after we taken in the fact that Jesus has made US His bride and will use us to fill the earth with His Kingdom, we must remember to be humble.**

So this morning we have considered the Kingdom. How we see the Kingdom will greatly impact our view of where history is going! We believe, with the historic church, that Jesus came and judged Jerusalem and the Old Creation in AD 70, forty years after He delivered HIS people through His death burial and resurrection...

- **Foreshadowed when God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt!**

In both cases, at the end of forty MORE years of God’s patience, those who rejected God’s promise were dead and His faithful covenant people were brought into a new land, a land flowing with milk & honey...

- **In Exodus it was the land of Canaan and in the Book of Acts it is the entire world!**

We believe that Christ now reigns and will put ALL of His enemies under His feet as Paul promised. We have a forward view of history and believe in the advancement & progress of Christ’s Kingdom. As we look around this hall and think of little Sam or Chase, Elijah or Jeremiah, or Mark or Charlie and even little Mitchell... And ALL of the covenant children God has richly blessed us with ... We must NOT just think of their future, but the future of THEIR children and that of their grand children AND even their great grandchildren!

- **Suddenly what we plan takes on a whole new perspective!**

We have a modest building fund here at Church of the King that may not even be used in our lifetimes...

- **BUT if God wills it might someday build a grand place for God’s people to worship for a thousand years!**

It is this type of attitude and hope that gives true meaning to the everyday work we do as we learned last week.

Sadly this stands in stark contrast with where much of the Church in America is today:

- **They have exchanged the truth of Scripture for a series of fiction novels that present a failing church & ALL God’s judgments & victories far into the future**

Commentator R.C. Ryle has much to teach us about Luke's Gospel, but he falters badly in this section because he has adopted the modern view of the end times. Mr. Ryle does not see Christ putting all things under His feet by the end of time as Paul does, but rather he says, "The Simeons and Annas will be as few in the last day as they were at the beginning of the Gospel."

- He sees NO progress for Christ's Kingdom!
- No victory for His Church

Mr. Ryle goes on to comment about those who believe the Bible proclaims an advancing Kingdom that will fill the earth and against which the gates of hell cannot prevail... *[That would be us!]* "They are fancying that missionaries, and ministers, and schools, will change the face of the world before the end comes. Let us beware of such mistakes." In other words the Kingdom of Christ has not yet come: Its entrance is still a future event...

This is NOT what Jesus, the Prophets the Apostles or anyone else in the entire Bible teaches. AND this is NOT just an academic question because what you believe here will have a profound impact on how you live your Christian life!

- Let US choose to live as those who serve the living and reigning Saviour!
- A Savior who is advancing His Kingdom and putting His enemies under His feet.

Let us boldly obey and follow the great command of Jesus to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And all of God's people said: Amen!

Communion Meditation:

Joel 2: " 16 Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, *[that would be Jesus!]*

And the bride from her dressing room. ... *[that would be His Church!]*

18 Then the Lord will be zealous for His land, And pity His people. 19 The Lord will answer and say to His people, "Behold, I will send you grain and new wine and oil, And you will be satisfied by them; I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations."