



## “The Kingdom of God”

**Luke 17:20-37**

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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**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 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. 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 topic of The Kingdom of God was and always has been a popular topic. Many a church has unabashedly pandered to the hype of end times conjecture and titillating rapture films. When given the opportunity, such subject matter is generally the first issue the unredeemed will reach for, and the largest crowd gatherer amongst the worldly audience. Certainly there is no shortage of interest in the future: *their own personal one as well as humanity in general.*

However, that interest has not been equated in personal action and change. No...we are incredibly intrigued, but seldom motivated. Sufficiently afraid, but lacking still in desire and action. Some of these folks have been known to confess openly in a weak moment, that the plan is to “get it together” right before the Lord returns. So careful observation and their best understanding is critical to making that a reality.

However, Jesus, in a sure anticipation of such a thinking, pointed out that the “kingdom of God” was not a destination or an event as much as it is a state of being. He declares herein that one cannot simply watch and wait for the signs in which to count down the days. And yet mankind continues to pour over books, conspiracy theories and ancient antiquities, as well as chasing after innumerable soothsayers and pied-pipers of doom.

This does not mean we will fail to recognize the “signs of the times” (Matthew 16:2-3) but we will not be able to do a ‘count down.’ This “kingdom” will not “come with observation.” The original Greek phrase herein is better translated “with signs predicting its arrival.” In other words, there will be no dramatic heavenly signs

common in our end-time literature. We keep looking for and waiting for something more...something that Jesus clearly says cannot be seen in such a manner.

Around and around...again and again, the scene repeats itself. Year after year...earthly kings and princes...wars and rumors of wars...countries and nations rise and fall. Each event bringing about fear and apprehensions...and always predictions of world ending events, the coming again of Christ, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Such was true all the way back to the *days of Noah and Lot*: (Gen 6-9; 18:16-19:29). Certainly we know that Noah and Lot were considered righteous men (2 Peter 2:7), yet the worlds of Noah and Lot were identified together in Judaism as periods of great wickedness and examples of God's judgment. Both Lot and Noah warned their generation of coming judgment, but no one paid attention (Gen 18:17-21). Despite the dire warnings and the overt signs, when judgment fell, mankind was totally unprepared (Gen 19:4-9, 24-25). One judgment was flood, one was fire. (2 Peter 3:3-4).

Luke 17:30 tells us that it will be "business as usual" right up until the last hour, and that whatever comes will happen *very* fast. The word "revealed" as in "the day the Son of Man is revealed" is "apokalupsis," the name of the last book of the Bible. It is used here of the visible unveiling of scripture at history's end, to be seen by all. Verse 31 warns clearly the need at that point to run, and run fast. Many have speculated that Jesus was speaking specifically concerning Jerusalem. For in His day such a picture may have seemed farfetched and hard to grasp, yet today it is a different story. For today, due to extreme defensive measures, Jerusalem can be closed up in a matter of minutes...nothing going in, and nothing going out. Like lightning, His return will not be a secret. It will be quick and all will see it.

All of this definitely speaks of the bodily and visible second coming of Christ, not something that all earthlings will experience. Certainly you may hold a different doctrinal position than I, as there are arguments on both sides of the pre-trib/post-trib position. However, even beyond the considerable scriptural evidences of a pre-tribulation rapture of the church, I can't miss the fact that Jesus mentioned Lot here...who was taken out *before* judgement was rendered upon Sodom. Certainly that has been the history of how God has worked. He did also with Noah and his family. God "*knows how to rescue the godly from trials*" (2 Peter 2:9) The Aramaic bible renders that passage as "*The Lord Jehovah knows to deliver from suffering those who reverence Him...*"

The irony of all of this, is that while they and we are looking about for signs of the coming kingdom of God, according to Christ Himself it is actually present in the here and now. Jesus went on to say the "kingdom" that we are to seek is not some place we are to dwell *in*, but rather something that is to *dwell in us*. One would think that rather obvious to those present that day, for they had just personally witnessed Jesus heal 10 lepers in one fell swoop. What more were they...*are* they, expecting? Yet man has been so blind for hundreds of years! We are straining our eyes toward the horizon, while great works of God's power is playing out right in front us.

The word "within" here is a somewhat poor translation in verse 21, and is better rendered "amongst" you or "in the midst" of you. I don't think we could believe that the kingdom of God was *within* the Pharisees! His kingdom was and is indeed inside of His children, but more so was present *amongst* them just as He is dwelling with us and with all communities of believers that truly seek him! Acts 17:27 tell us that while God does indeed desire that "*the nations seek after God and feel their way toward him and find him,*" we that actually do will

indeed find Him for “*he is not far from any one of us.*” Certainly there are future components to the Kingdom, but the fact remains, that what the world is waiting for, incredibly, *is already here.*

The Pharisees however, were materialists. The only kingdom they cared about was the kingdom to be established in this world at history’s end. Such speaks clearly to the fact that the Pharisees are “alive and well” even today! For the residents of this world also want the world that they have presently, and want no changes to the status quo until it’s time to “reboot.” This is the world we live in!

Because of our failure to grasp the fact that the Kingdom of God is not some future destination, we live our lives compartmentalized. There is the *now* and there is the *then*. Divided by the great chasm of death, these two lives and worlds are separate and distinct. And because of such thinking, we open ourselves to a lifetime of fruitless strife and worthless personal battles.

Consider for a moment such thinking. Imagine if you were in the after-life this morning, and life as you lived it on earth is now gone. I wonder what our day-to-day existence would be like? We all would believe that the fleshly battles would now be over. No more striving for *earthly* goals and *temporal* gains. No more distractions with earthly toys and selfish competition for status. No more struggles over *my* time verses *God* time...no more angst over how much I should serve God and the rest of His children. We would of course be spending much more time worshipping Jesus, and fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters. There wouldn’t be the priority of chasing the opposite sex, or having babies and building blood families, *because none of that would exist any longer.* We would work for God’s glory and the enrichment of our lives and those around us, not for the paycheck. We wouldn’t stress over time and mortality, because we of course would have no such limits and would be living forever.

The pictures are beautiful and we anxiously await for that day to come. But until then, we of course are doomed to battle with the fleshly lusts of this earth and strive for temporary gains and positions. We continue to be distracted by toys and we compete with brothers and sisters even for position and status. We go on struggling and negotiating with God for a mutually beneficial schedule...something that will make us both happy. We continue to be too busy to give God the time that He is asking for, or the time we know we should give our brethren. We, of course, go on making the mating calls our highest motivation and priority...giving supreme consideration and position to marriage, children, and the mortgaged house in the burbs. We keep chasing the almighty dollar, and will excuse ourselves claiming “a man has to eat doesn’t he?” even though we are doing much much more than just “eating.” We will of course stress over the brevity of our mortality, grabbing all the gusto we can gather, making our personal emotional happiness the supreme achievement.

But according to this passage, there is no great chasm between these two lives. According to Jesus, His kingdom...the “Kingdom of God” *is already here.*

If that be true, then such a truth should stop us in our tracks. We must ask ourselves therefore, why we continue to live as if it were not true...as if it all was “in the post” and would arrive most any day, but it is certainly not here today. Why does our lives and living scream that Jesus is a liar and it’s not a fact? And instead we wait white knuckled by the door for his return. We watch the titillating rapture movies and read all the predictions no matter how fringe the writer and his scenario. We look toward the time when we can all ‘go home’ and begin the great cosmic “Jesus vacation.” We talk of his coming and speak of being with Him almost as if we are trying to convince ourselves it’s going to be great, when the fact is most of us really don’t want to be there.

How do I know? How can I say such a presumptuous thing? Because He factually has *already* come...He is *already* here with us, the kingdom has *already* been delivered, and few if any of us are actually living in the light of that fact. “We want all that heavenly stuff...really....honest! Just not today! Later! When we are with Jesus and all *this* stuff is gone.”

Now, to be fair, this place...*is not heaven*. No, sin and temptation abound here, so there is no denying that life is often hard because of such. We are living in a fallen world where man is sentenced to “work with his hands...and plow the soil.” Yet I am reminded that our Lord’s man Peter recorded in scripture that “*God has given us everything we need for living a godly life.*” (2 Peter 1:3) So that excuse falls flat rather quickly. Maybe we want to excuse ourselves because we have failed to come to that confession and fail to live the life that would embrace the rest of that verse in Peter. It says “We have received all of this by **coming to know him**, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence.” Hmmmm...we were just counting on doing that in the coming “kingdom of God” right?

Look, the truth is we struggle and strive because we have created a ‘great divide’ between the “now” and the “then.” We are waiting for something that essentially already arrived and is available to us right now, *today!* Again, I am not saying that this is heaven and that life in spiritual Shangri-La is just a matter of thinking right! I’m saying there is a place where Jesus is king, and we all are cared for, watched over, and are able to give ourselves abundantly and dynamically to our redeemer and experience His blessings and witness his miraculous. And it isn’t *coming*, it’s *already here!*

But the truth is...*whether we will admit such or not*, most of us really don’t want to live there! At least not yet. I mean...once we’re *dead*...well, that’s another story. And heaven? Well, it beats the alternative. And we essentially *prove* this heart because we refuse to live in or even acknowledge that kingdom *now*. Jesus tells us in John 11:26 “everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” And yet most of us are waiting around for just that...fearfully and dramatically. Why would he say that? I mean, we are all going to die right? Hmmmm...it depends on what you mean by “die.” Because if I am living in his kingdom today, I will go on living in his kingdom even after this body ceases. And I will not “die” in that kingdom.

In Mark chapter 12, a scribe comes to Jesus and asks Him a question. He asks “what is the most important commandment?” Jesus replies “...*you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.*’ *The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.*” The scribe...having seemed to grasp the concept, replied in consensus and confirms his agreement. He proved such by saying “*This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.*” He saw the adherence to these issues as quite naturally superseding all the “do’s” that we in the religious would think we are to “do.” That all the “do’s” aren’t going to matter if we are still living outside of his present kingdom. Jesus tells the man, “*You are not far from the Kingdom of God.*”

**There** is the sign post! There is the path! That’s the way home. How many of you are just living in Kansas and waiting for Oz? It’s all happening NOW Christian! God is here now and awesome in his manifest. He is not the “man behind the curtain” for you to see one day. He is the king. The king of the “Kingdom of God.” The curtain will indeed one day be pulled back, but only to find that some people have already been living there for years...

**The “kingdom of God” is amongst you...**