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The Present and Future Kingdom

LUKE 17:20-37

Introduction

1. Our Scripture reading this morning is about the “kingdom of God,” but what is the kingdom of God.
2. By that I mean what is its nature, what does it represent?
3. I would like to share with you a fundamental definition of the kingdom of God which I ran across this past week in my preparation for this morning’s lesson.
4. The kingdom of God is *God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s rule.*
5. Those of us here today who are a part of God’s kingdom are His people, in His place, under His rule.
6. Here in our text from Luke’s gospel we find Jesus talking to the Pharisees and His disciples about . . .
 - a. The now of God’s kingdom
 - b. The not yet of God’s kingdom
 - c. The dangers we must be careful to avoid
7. As we look at what Jesus had to say on that day, please, I encourage you to take His message to heart.

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I. The Now of the Kingdom

A. THE PHARISEES’ QUESTION — “WHEN WILL THE KINGDOM OF GOD COME?”

“Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said . . .” (Luke 17:20a, NASB95).

1. From the beginning of His ministry, Jesus had spoken about the “kingdom of God”.
 - a. Luke, here in chapter 8 of his gospel, wrote that Jesus “began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God” (Luke 8:1, NASB95).
 - b. When Jesus sent out the seventy on the limited commission, He instructed them to tell those they healed, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:9).
 - c. Jesus had even taught His followers to pray that God’s kingdom would come — “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.” (Luke 11:2).
 - d. In His parables, He was constantly comparing the kingdom of God to various things with which His listeners were familiar (i.e. “a mustard seed” (Luke 13:19), “leaven” (Luke 13:21)).
2. Luke records thirty-two times that Jesus utilized the phrase “kingdom of God” — it was His favorite subject.
3. It was only natural for the Pharisees to come up to Jesus and say, “We keep hear you talking about the kingdom of God? When is it going to appear? When will we see it?”
4. Their concept of the kingdom of God was a political kingdom:
 - a. They were looking for the day when the promised Messiah would arrive with his armies and drive the Romans out of Israel.
 - b. They anticipated the re-establishment of the kingdom Israel had known in the days of David and his son, Solomon.

Slide 3**B. JESUS’ RESPONSE — “THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS IN YOUR MIDST.”**

“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your

midst” (Luke 17:20b-21, NASB95).

1. Jesus, however, told was not coming in that way, so that they could point to certain signs and say “the kingdom of God is coming.”
2. Neither would they be able to say, “Here it is!” or “There it is!”
3. Why? Because, as Jesus told them, “the kingdom of God is in your midst.”
4. The KJV, NKJV & NIV all translate this as “the kingdom of God is within you.”
 - a. While it can be translated this way, Jesus would never have told the unbelieving Pharisees that the kingdom was “within” them.
 - b. This phrase can also be translated as “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (NASB95, ESV, NRSV, HCSB).
5. What Jesus was saying to Pharisees was that the kingdom was standing in their midst in the person and work of Christ!
6. These men were unknowingly asking the kingdom’s King, the King of kings, when His kingdom would come, as He was standing there in their midst!
7. Earlier, on another occasion, which Luke records for us in 12:54-56, Jesus had told his listeners,

“When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it turns out. “And when you see a south wind blowing, you say, ‘It will be a hot day,’ and it turns out that way. “You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?” (Luke 12:54b–56, NASB95)
8. So it was, that Jesus was pointing these men to the “now,” the “already” of the kingdom.
9. However, there is another aspect of the kingdom to which Jesus turned.
10. It is this aspect that I encourage you to seriously consider this morning.

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II. The Not Yet of the Kingdom

A. THE DAYS THAT WILL COME — HIS FOLLOWERS WILL LONG FOR HIS PRESENCE

“And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. “They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.” (Luke 17:22–23, NASB95)

1. Jesus knew the time wasn't far away that He would die on the cross for our sins, be buried in the tomb, rise from the dead three days later and ultimately ascend back to His Father, where He would sit on His throne at His Father's right hand (Hebrews 1:3).
2. He told His disciples that a time would come when His followers would long for His presence among them.
3. More than anything they would long for His return in glory.
 - a. Is that not what we long for here today?
 - b. Do our hearts not burn for Him to return and make all things right?
 - c. Do we not want Him to take away all of our sickness and disease, pain and sorrow?
4. Jesus said there would be those who say, “Look there!” or “Look here!”.
5. He warns us, “Do not go away, and do not run after them!”
6. You and I must stay the course, and remain faithful to the truth we find in His Word.

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B. THE DAY OF THE SON OF MAN — NO ONE WILL SEE IT COMING, BUT EVERYONE WILL SEE IT WHEN IT HAPPENS !

“For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” (Luke 17:24–25,

NASB95)

1. Jesus compared His return to lightning flashing across the sky.
2. Many of us in this room have seen lightning in the distance:
 - a. There is a sudden flash of light from the sky to the earth.
 - b. Or, that flash of light darts across the sky.
3. The truth about lightning is that none of us know when or where it is going to happen until it does.
4. The same is true of His return:
 - a. No one will see it coming,
 - b. But, everyone will see it when it happens!
5. Before that day could ever come, our Lord first had to suffer and be rejected by His own generation.
6. This was prophesied over and over again in the Old Testament:

“He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

(Isaiah 53:3, NASB95)

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Psalm 22aa, NASB95)

“They pierced my hands and my feet.” (Psalm 22:16, NASB95)

“They divide my garments among them,
And for my clothing they cast lots.”

(Psalm 22:18, NASB95)

7. All of that has happened. Now you and I await His return in glory.

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[With that in mind, Jesus said there are two . . .]

III. The Dangers We Must Avoid

A. INDIFFERENCE TO OUR LORD'S COMING

1. The Example From Noah's Day

“And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26–27, NASB95)

- a. In Noah's day, prior to the flood, people were going on with their regular everyday activities.
- b. People were eating, drinking and getting married and giving their daughters in marriage.
- c. They were so preoccupied with daily life that they gave no thought to anything beyond that — no one heeded Noah's constant warning.
- d. All of that changed the day Noah entered the ark.
- e. On that day, the flood came and they were all destroyed.

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2. The Example From Lot's Day

“It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:28–29, NASB95)

- a. It was no different in Lot's day.
- b. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.
- c. Lot's righteous soul was tormented day after day by their lawless deeds.
- d. They too were indifferent to any considerations above those things.

- e. All of that changed the day Lot and his family left town.
- f. On that day, God “rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all” (v. 29).

Slide 8**B. ATTACHMENT TO OUR POSSESSIONS AND EARTHLY COMFORTS**

“It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.” (Luke 17:30–33, NASB95)

1. It is no different as we sit here today.
2. Our Lord has promised that He will return, but there are those who are indifferent.
3. Not only does Jesus tell us not to have an attitude of indifference to His return, but that we must not hold an attachment to our possessions and earthly concerns.
4. In 70 A.D. when the Roman armies began drawing near to the city of Jerusalem, the Christians remembered these words of our Lord and fled to mountains.
5. They did not try to return home in order to retrieve their personal possessions.
6. As a result, they were spared while over one million Jews died at the hands of the Romans.
7. We sing, “this world is not my home, I just a passing through” and “my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.”
8. I encourage you to make sure this is true of your life.
9. If you seek to keep your life in this world, I promise you that you will lose it eternally, but if you are willing to lose your life for Christ’s sake, you will preserve it.

Conclusion

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1. Jesus said one last thing to His listeners on that day which should make us all sit up and take notice about that day:

“I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. “There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.”” (Luke 17:34–36, NASB95)

2. When our Lord returns in all His glory and His holy angels with Him, people will be engaged in all aspects of life:
 - a. Some will be going to bed, others asleep, and some will just be getting up.
 - b. Some will be on their way to work, others at work and others coming home.
 - c. Some students will be preparing for school, others finishing their day and still others working on their homework for the next day.
3. In each of these scenarios there will be people side by side — some will meet the Lord in the air and go home to glory, others will be left to face destruction.
4. Each of us is making a choice each day of our lives as to where we will spend eternity.
5. What is it that you are choosing?