

ARE YOU READY?

Luke 17:20-37

Prophecy. A fascinating theme to titillate the mind of the curious.

People have always wanted to know the future. We turn to anyone we believe can give us insight into what tomorrow holds. We turn to everything from astrology to fortune tellers, back to prophets and preachers to find out about tomorrow.

That pursuit reminds me of the man who found a genie who offered to grant him one wish. A brilliant insight came to him--"Give me a copy of the local newspaper one year from today". His wish granted, he quickly turned to the business pages and began to plan how he might invest his funds. He was laying the paper aside, when he happened to notice the obituary column on the back. **It changed his whole perspective on life, in a moment!**

That's why God reveals the future to us. NOT to tickle our curiosity, but **to change our perspective on life**--to focus on the *really* important--on things of eternal value.

That's the point in Jesus' message about the future of the kingdom in Luke 17.

Two distinct groups come to our Lord with a question on their minds: *What about the kingdom, when will it come? What signs should we be looking for?*

Both Pharisees and disciples ask when the kingdom will come.

Our Lord has a distinct response for each. Pharisees need one answer; disciples another. Our Lord answers both according to their need to know. He tells each just what they need to know about the kingdom--**to change their perspective on life.**

The Pharisees need to know that the essence of the kingdom lies in its King. He has already come and they are about to miss out on the benefits of His coming.

His disciples already know that the King is there. But more important for them, they need to know that rejection comes before glory. First He will suffer rejection, then the kingdom will come. He tells them what to expect in preparation for His return, but not until He reminds them about the cross.

[In 17:20-21 we find the Pharisee's question:]

NATURE OF THE KINGDOM 20-21 "When will the kingdom come?"

Jesus had been announcing the coming of the Kingdom. Their question, more like a challenge, was "When are you going to get on with it? It was another push for an irrefutable proof.

Jesus responds that the kingdom isn't a show that attracts attention through spectacular signs; its essence lies in its King.

They want to see indisputable signs. Jesus tells them it won't come that way. They've already seen the evidence. He is there; the evidence is in place. There's nothing to wait for!

For three years they have missed the point. They don't want to know the truth.

*The King is present; they must recognize **Him**, the essence of the kingdom.*

The kingdom isn't about an external manifestation; it's the presence of the King.

The expression "**the Kingdom of God is within you**" has baffled scholars for generations. The preposition used can mean "within," "among," or "in the midst of."

Jesus *doesn't* mean the Kingdom was in unbelieving Pharisees.

They demonstrate repeatedly they are personally far removed from His Kingdom.

So then, in what way is it among them, or in their midst?

It is a warning that the King is in their midst, and they have not wanted to get better acquainted with Him.

They aren't interested in His coming.

The Sign (Announcement) of the Kingdom 22-24

Jesus gives His disciples the answer that the Pharisees wanted. He didn't give it to the Pharisees because that wasn't what they needed to hear.

He revealed to His followers that the Kingdom had been postponed. They would long for "His day" and not see it until much later (22). Though they hear rumors of His appearance, they shouldn't believe them because He would not come now (23); everyone would know when He comes (24).

We won't have to go out and look for the sign of His coming.

It will be apparent to everyone, just **like a sudden lightning flash** on a dark night. It doesn't matter whether you are looking the right way or not.

It lights the whole sky and attracts everyone's attention.

I read this week: "When Mrs. Hutton speaks, *E.F.* listens!"

That's the way it will be when Jesus comes again; it won't be like the first time when everyone vacillated about Jesus. He will come like lightning! Everyone will know He's come. **HE WILL CATCH PEOPLE'S ATTENTION!** He will speak, and *EVERYONE* will listen!

When it happens no one will wonder whether they missed it!

REJECTION OF THE KING 25

Before that happens, He must first be rejected. After His death He will come again.

CONDITIONS PRECEDING THE KINGDOM 26-37

Previous parallels 26-30

Conditions will be like the time of Noah and Lot.

How will they be like those days?

Noah's time 26-27

They were eating

symbols of partying

They were drinking

They were marrying

symbols of life as usual

They were giving in marriage

No one was concerned about God's intervention. Until, . . . the flood came *and destroyed them all!*

Lot's time 28-29

They were eating

symbols of partying

They were drinking

They were buying

symbols of business as usual

They were selling

They were planting

They were building

No one was concerned God would intervene--they had forever, right? *NOT!!!*

Until, . . . it rained fire and brimstone *and destroyed them all!*

Jesus' time 30 The lesson from the parallels:

The parallels are times of rampant sin and disregard for God. It will be like that when He comes again. Look up! Be ready! It could be anytime!

Does that description match anytime in history that you are familiar with?

Life be going on as usual, without regard for divine intervention. Until, . . . He comes, and then the judgment *will destroy them all!*

People will be surprised by the judgment which will suddenly come upon them.

These are days when date setting for the Lord's return is popular!
In 88 I was asked about "88 reasons why the Lord would come in 88"

"89 reasons why the Lord would come in 89"

Just last month one Korean group was expecting Him.

I predicted in 89 that we would be hearing about 93 because of its seven-year connection with 2000. Last week someone asked me what I thought of the new predictions for 93.

I don't *know* when He is coming. It will be a time when people don't expect Him. I have a feeling prophecies by date setters will go a long way toward convincing people to ignore the warning!
HE WILL COME! We don't know when!

Those awaiting His coming will recognize events and escape the preceding affliction.

Jesus warns us to live with one eye on the final curtain--the day of His return.

Noah's neighbors were so caught up in the affairs of daily living that they paid no attention to the signs of danger.

Lot's friends were so involved in business as usual that they ignored the danger signs of coming judgment.

Will we be so caught up with our lives, our business, our possessions, that we miss the signs and fail to be ready for His coming?

Eschatology makes a difference. If we really believe that our Lord may come at any moment, as the EFCA professes, **that will change our perspective on life.**

Recently several families have been faced with the imminent prospect of death. If you were told tomorrow that you have 6 months to live, what would you do differently? TODAY could be our last day. The Lord could come any time! How does that affect our lives? The signs are there--not all, but enough to make us realize we may *not* be here by 2000; in fact, we may not be here next Sunday! Does THAT change your perspective on life?

Is there someone you need to tell about Christ? Is there something you need to take care of before He comes again? If He could come any day, that should change our perspective on life! We have matters to deal with. Or, have we become so absorbed in affairs of daily living, with business as usual, that we no longer expect His return?

Present warning 31-33 *In light of the unexpected nature of His coming, how should we live?*

Danger of turning back for possessions 31

Sodom brings to mind **Pompeii**, engulfed by a flood of lava. One historian writes, "Many people--chiefly the wealthy--refused to abandon homes and possessions hoping to hang on to what was theirs. Steadily the hot tide of rock and ashes rose against the doors and windows, burying the victims as they huddled in courtyards and cellars. Poisonous gases killed others who had taken refuge in upper stories of homes. Eventually the molten mass of liquid fire crept above the highest rooftops, and Pompeii was destroyed."

Example of Lot's wife 32 *"Remember Lot's wife!"*

Her heart was enmeshed in Sodom; she couldn't avoid the anxious look back to where her heart was.

She had something on her mind that kept her from following God's revealed plan.

Gen. 19:26 reveals her fall: "*But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt.*"

Why was she "*behind him*"?

She seems to be dragging her feet! Why?

She was attached to the lure of Sodom. Her life and her possessions were back in town; that's where her heart was. The tug back to Sodom was too strong, and she was destroyed by the side effects!

That's what our Lord is warning *us* about! We can get so attached to our lifestyle and our things, that when the moment comes to flee

we will be pulled "back to Sodom" and destroyed by the side effects.

"Just let me grab a few things!"

Warning for all concerned 33 *Implications of the warning?*

If you try to cling to this life and its things, you lose it all. If you count this life lost and let go of it, you save everything.

Our hearts are too easily enmeshed with the things of this life.

The one who tries to cling to this life, loses it all. Real life is found by letting go of our present life.

Selectivity of the judgment 34-36

Three examples--One taken for judgment--one left

This "taking" isn't the rapture. In Noah's day the evil ones were "taken"; he entered a new age. The same in Lot's day--they fled and judgment "took" those left behind

The judgment is selective. Two won't fall just because they happen to be together. God is able to sort. Two side by side will be distinguished, one taken and the other left. Physical proximity is no problem for God, He "knows those who are His".

Location of the judgment 37

Where??? *Where vultures gather around the carcass*

Wherever conditions are right. The condition: a dead carcass.

Where there is corruption and sin, judgment will fall, even as in the days of Noah and of Lot.

† That generation of Israel qualified for that, from God's perspective;

* but pagans qualify also.

In this context, while He may be including both, He is probably looking at the putred condition in that generation of Israel (cp. v. 25).

Look for the dead, smelly carcass

Jesus pictured contemporary Jewish society of that generation as a lifeless, rotting corpse. It will be true of the generation when He comes as well. Wherever the smelly corpse lies, that's where the judgment will come. His coming will result in judgment for the deserving, wherever they may be.

It will attract the wrecking crew! The vultures will gather to pick the bones clean.

What lessons should we learn from Jesus' teaching about the future kingdom?

The Pharisees had to prepare for the Kingdom by recognizing the King. They had to realize who Jesus is, and submit to Him as their king, before they could hope to realize personally the benefits of His kingdom.

His disciples need to prepare to go, without the attachments that so easily grab us in this life. Ready to join our King, with no need to "go back and grab a few things" .

How about us? Are we ready for His coming?

Are we anxiously waiting for Him?

Or, do we have "more important matters" we have to attend to?