

Christs Return

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter, the second chapter we read in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 17.

And again, just looking at this section, from verse 20 to the end. Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, Then the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, Look, here it is or there, for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you, and so on.

Now, Jesus was always being bombarded with questions. And it's a good thing for us to ask the Lord questions. And I think that's one of the great things with regard to the Bible, because the Bible answers a lot of the questions that we have.

It doesn't answer them all. And I don't think there is anybody living in this world who has an answer to all the questions that they have. And I know that when we come to God's Word, it's amazing how often God's Word will answer particular questions that we may have had, that we may have been wrestling with.

Anyway, we have here a Pharisee asking Jesus a question about the kingdom. And this Pharisee was wanting to know when the kingdom of God would come.

[1 : 35] And Jesus is showing here, as he showed on other occasions, that the kingdom has already come. And that's what Jesus means when he says here, The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

Because, you see, the king of the kingdom, Jesus, is here. He is speaking to the crowd. And when he says the kingdom is already, the kingdom is in the midst of you, this is what he was referring to, that he, as the king of the kingdom, was here.

They were all around him, and here he was. Here is the king. So, in a sense, when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, and as he began his ministry, here he is ushering in, as it were, the kingdom.

So there is always this aspect of it. Of course, we know that there is another time coming when Jesus returns. And when he will bring, as it were, where he will come in his rule and in his authority. And we're aware of that, and we pray for that, the coming of the kingdom. But, you know, when we pray, you know that the Lord's Prayer, when it says, Thy kingdom come.

[2 : 53] That's part of the Lord's Prayer. Thy will be done on earth so as it is in heaven. And so on. When we pray that prayer, Thy kingdom come, we are actually asking that the kingdom would grow within our own heart.

That's part of the prayer. Lord, as the king of the kingdom, come into my heart more and more and more. We're praying that. That's part of the Lord's Prayer.

That we want that we will become more like Jesus. that his grace will touch our life and affect our life and influence our life in all the different areas and aspects of it.

This is part of the prayer. Every time we pray that, and we should pray, actually we should be praying the Lord's Prayer every day. And ask that his kingdom would come.

And when we pray, Lord, may your kingdom come, we're not just praying that it will come within our own life, but that it will also come within our own home.

[3 : 56] In other words, affecting and touching everybody within our own family. That we pray that it will come within our communities, so that people's lives, so that the kingdom of God will have an influence in the whole community roundabout, within our towns, within our villages, within our islands, and indeed throughout our land.

So when we pray this, we pray, thy kingdom come, we are praying it in this particular way. But then again, there is a future aspect to the kingdom.

And when we pray, Lord, may thy kingdom come, we have, yes, the present, but we're also praying with regard to the future. When the Lord will once again come, and he will show himself to be the ruler and to display his authority and to his power.

When he will be visible to all created humanity, when the return of Jesus will be an awesome spectacle that every eye will see. This is part of what this prayer involves.

Thy kingdom come. And God's people are waiting for the king to return. At the end in the book of Revelation, right at the very end, when Jesus is talking about his return, the church responds.

[5 : 21] And the church's response to the proclamation and declaration from the king that he is coming again, the church's response is, even so come, Lord Jesus.

Can you pray that tonight? That's a very telling question. Can you, with your hand on your heart, say, Lord, I would love you to return tonight.

Are you ready for the king to return? Because if you're saying to Jehovah, I don't want the Lord to return tonight because I'm not ready.

Then it shows exactly where you are. So that those tonight who are able with their hand on their heart to say, I would really love that the Lord Jesus would return tonight.

Are showing that they are ready to meet with the king. One day or one night, Jesus will return. We don't know when, but he will.

[6 : 28] He was, he's going to come, as we saw, he's going to come with the clouds of heaven. In the clouds of heaven with the holy angels. And he is going to return. And there will be no doubting, no uncertainty.

Does it fill you with dread that he's going to return? Or are you looking forward to this with anticipation? Are you able to say, even so come, Lord Jesus.

Now, as Jesus tells us something about the end, about his return, he doesn't do so in a way to entertain us or to satisfy our curiosity.

Because it is very clear from here that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in many ways is going to be, it's going to be devastating and it's going to be traumatic.

It will be absolutely decisive. It will be totally unchangeable. Because when he returns, that is how it's going to be.

[7 : 30] One of the things that Jesus makes very clear to us in the word is that God has not dated that event for us.

God knows when that event will be, but he hasn't dated it for us. It is known only to himself. The only thing that he has told us is it's definitely going to be.

There is no date as such given to us. And that's very interesting to take hold of because people are always telling us and we're always hearing claims and countless claims and this and that that the end is going to be.

There are people who will make false claims and say here is Christ and there is Christ. But it's not. All these pronouncements about end times, they're all false because nobody knows.

You know, Jesus said on one occasion that not even the angels in heaven know when this is going to be. And it's amazing how people are always making proclamations and telling when the end is going to be.

[8 : 41] I think some people are forecasting it's as a 2012 that could be the end of the world. In fact, I read somewhere that of some people who are actually wanting or planning to commit suicide before that date because they did not want to be alive when the world ends.

It's really quite extraordinary. And we see very clearly here how Satan is blinding people's minds because if people would only search through the truth, they would discover that all these declarations and proclamations, whoever makes them about talking about the end of the world and when that will be, that they don't know.

Jesus makes that very, very clear that nobody knows when that time will be. Now, when Jesus here, as he says, the days are coming when, in verse 22, the days are coming when you will decide to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you will not see it.

Jesus is there talking to the disciples and I think really what he is saying is that they wouldn't see his return, that they wouldn't be alive when he returns.

but I think it's also true to say that in these words that we will also sometimes say that, that the days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you will not see it because is it not true that there are times that you become weary in this world?

[10:23] There's so much in this world that's wonderful, so much that fills us but are there not times when you're saying to yourself, you know, I actually long for the time when Jesus will come again.

Are there not times when you are so ready and you say, the Lord could come tonight and I would be more than happy. There are other times maybe you say to yourself, oh no, I don't feel tonight ready to meet with Jesus.

but there are other times that you do. You genuinely, hand on heart, you feel ready and you say, I could go tonight. And there are times that you have this sense of weariness and you know, even the world itself is becoming weary.

It's a tired world because the world seems to be moving at an incredible pace. Not just, it doesn't just seem to be ourselves but everything is just moving on.

And as you see the whole way of climate change, you see the, just so much happening, you almost get a sense that even the very world is weary. And so it is.

[11:34] Because the Bible tells us that the whole creation groans. That there's an actual groaning taking place. And that there's a waiting for the redemption.

You see, the Lord is going to come. And there are going to be new heavens and new earth. The Lord is going to redo, reclaim everything. The fall, although it has ruined and marred, Satan will not win in the end.

The Lord will be victorious and triumphant. So all of this is going on within the heart of the believer. And as we said, where we say, even so come, Lord Jesus.

Now, as Jesus speaks about these false claims and counterfeit claims, he says, the best way of dealing with these claims, because people are going to be saying every so often, there's going to come somebody who's making this tremendous claim that they are Christ.

There's going to be false Christs coming. Jesus said, it doesn't matter who makes what claim about what. what I'm telling you is this. When I return, there will be no doubts and there will be no uncertainties.

[12:52] It will be dazzling. It will be definite. It will be unmistakable. It will be just like a great flash of lightning.

If you are close by, if there's a thunderstorm, if there's just one of these huge sheets of lightning where that lightens up everything, you know it.

It's unmistakable. And Jesus highlights that nobody's going to be in any doubt when he returns. There won't be any jibidi.

There won't be people saying, I wonder if this really is the return of Jesus. It will be unmistakable. Everybody will know. And Jesus highlights that there's only going to be one. He's highlighting this one crucial event that is going to take place before he returns.

And he's just about on the very threshold of it, the borders of it. And he tells us that in verse 25, but first he must suffer many things and be rejected by his generation.

[13:57] So Jesus is saying he has to be rejected, he has to suffer, he has to die. And of course, it's from that period until his return that the kingdom of God is growing.

We're living in these days. The past generation lived in these days. We don't know when he will return, but we're living in this period. And all this period between his suffering, his death, his resurrection, and his coming again is this period when the kingdom grows and we're right in it. And then suddenly, powerfully, without any warning, whatever, Jesus is going to return. That's what he tells us.

And how are things going to be when he returns? Well, again, Jesus highlights one great fact. He highlights the normality of life.

the day he returns, everything is going to be so normal. Sometimes people will think when Jesus returns, there'll be sort of, there's bound to be signs that day or that week.

[15:10] We're going to be absolutely persuaded, oh, Jesus is coming today. No, Jesus is saying everything is going to be absolutely normal. And Jesus highlights this from two particular periods in life where God's judgment came.

These two moments. That was when the judgment came at the time of the flood and the judgment came at the time of Sodom. And what was remarkable about both of these periods of judgment was that right up to the very moment when the judge, prior to the judgment coming, life was going on as normal.

Right up until the moment when the great waters of the deep, when, as it were, where God broke in and the deep gave up and the floods came down, right up until that moment life was normal.

Up until the moment the sulfur, the fire, and the brimstone poured down, life was normal in Sodom. We're told that they were eating, drinking, buying, selling.

Everyday activities. That's what people do every day. We eat, we drink, buying, and selling. In fact, it also shows that they were marrying, planting, and building.

[16:34] What does that indicate? That's looking at life settling down. Marrying to settle down. Building, planting. It's looking at life long term.

In other words, people had no awareness of what was just going to happen. It was normal everyday activity, and if it was looking at anything, it was looking at bedding down, as it were.

The only problem was that God was not in their thoughts. People lived their life, and God was not in their thoughts.

I wonder in life here in our land tonight, how many people out of all the millions are actually living life and God is not in their thoughts.

No thought of God. People get up, they go to work, they live out their days, they go to bed, they never think of God.

[17:43] I can't think of anything more bleak, more despairing, more empty, more awful, because the God who holds their life in his hand is one day going to require from them and ask them to give an account to him for everything that they have received and everything that they have done in this world.

But just as this is what Jesus is saying, just as in the days of Noah, where people, where everything seemed to be normal, remember Noah took it seriously and God always puts a witness before he brings judgment.

Noah was a witness in the days prior to the flood. The building of the ark was a witness. For 120 years, Noah built that ark and during these 120 years, he preached to the people and he told the people he was a preacher of righteousness and yet nobody as far as we can see believed or turned.

They thought Noah was off his head. And then there came the day when Noah entered into the ark. And the moment Noah, the day that Noah entered into the ark, God closed the door and the floods came.

Lot in Sodom was grieved by the lifestyle there. The day that Lot left Sodom, God's judgment came.

[19:17] You see, one day it's all going to be over. Now, the idea some have that when God's final judgment comes that there's going to be a second chance, that there's going to be a sort of opportunity given to right the wrongs.

That somehow when the Lord returns that we'll be able to, as it were, retrace our steps and to fix the things that have gone wrong and given a time to make right with God, well, Jesus shows us it's not going to be like that.

People will have no time even to grab things out of their houses. That's how it's going to be. It's going to be so instant. Let no, on that day, let the one who was in the house stop with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who was in the field not return back.

Everything is going to be instant. It's going to be final. You see, it's just now the Lord is giving us this time to prepare, to make right with himself.

And we've got to use these opportunities, grab these opportunities, because one day it could be too late. And the Lord is warning us about becoming too comfortable in this world.

[20:35] And he highlights the warning through Lot's wife. Lot's wife went out to Sodom, but Sodom didn't go out of her, and she perished. Because when she went out, she went out with Sodom in her heart.

She tried to live two lives at the one time. She tried to live in Sodom and out of Sodom, and she couldn't. And she became a monument, a pillar of warning throughout the generations, that you cannot live that kind of life.

To choose the Lord, that's what Jesus is saying, to choose the Lord may cost us dear, may bring persecution in our life, it may bring a risk to our life in some ways, but that is better than putting your soul at permanent risk.

Lose your life in Christ and you'll save it, is what Jesus really is saying. And Jesus shows us what it's going to be like on that day. One will be taken and the other left.

It's going to be quite remarkable. Because you see, from what I can understand in Scripture, that when the Lord returns, there's going to be amazing things happening.

[21 : 47] One of the things, for instance, is the graves will open and the dead will rise. another thing is that the Lord's people will be caught up together in the air.

And those who are outside Christ will be left, left for a final judgment. And it's an awful picture, and I think that's something of what we have here.

Because we have this picture where one will be taken and the other left. and the disciples are asking where, Lord, and he says, where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

It's an incredibly brutal and stark picture. The corpses, the dead, those who are dead spiritually. Just as you see these pictures of bodies lying out in the desert and the vultures hovering over, ready to go down and start picking the flesh off the bones.

And here's a picture of those who are dead spiritually. They're going to be left. Left to be judged. Left in their corruption.

[22 : 59] Left for the vultures. And it's incredibly solemn, because we've got to remember, these are the words of Jesus. Now, we don't claim to understand everything, because prophecy is very, very hard to understand.

But there is sufficient here for us to understand, to realize, that the Lord is saying to us, look, the message out of this is, Jesus is coming again.

And he's going to take his own people home. And he's going to leave those who are not his own to be judged. There will be a final judgment and all created humanity will be brought before the Lord. But right now, right here, right now, we are still on mercy's ground. This is not the day of judgment, it's a day of salvation. And Jesus is offering us tonight hope in himself.

And he's saying, you do not need to perish, you can have life, you can have life in me. and this is why we must, we must, we must close our eyes and close our ears, close our eyes to what is written before us, close our ears to the appeal of the gospel.

[24 : 14] But we must say, even so, come Lord Jesus, Lord, come into my heart tonight. if you're not ready for Jesus to return into this world, I ask you, ask him tonight to come into your heart.

Even so, come Lord Jesus, come into my heart tonight, make me a follower, make me a disciple, break in, break over the obstacles and the hindrances and all these barriers that are between myself and you.

And if you're here tonight and you feel hard in your heart, ask the Lord to break that hardness.

Because, you see, our whole future, we're going to live forever and ever and ever and ever.

Our journey in this world is so brief over against the endlessness of eternity. And the Lord is so serious about wanting us to discover what life is.

Well, tonight you are in the place where life, real life is offered. Take it while it is being offered to you. Now is the day of salvation.

[25 : 27] Now is a day of grace. Don't turn away from this great offer of Jesus. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray that the power of the gospel may break into people's hearts, that souls might know the joy of the Lord.

O Lord, we pray for any in here tonight who have not submitted themselves to Jesus. And we pray that whatever is holding them back might be broken in such a way that the love of Jesus and the power of Jesus might become preeminent and that they may say, O my Lord and my God.

Bless us, each one, we pray, and all whom we love. Take us all home safely, part us with thy blessing, forgive us all our sin, in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.