

## Believing for the Advent-ure!

Living a Life of Daring Faith between Jesus' First and Second Coming

### Luke 17.20-37

### Living with the End in Mind

#### Text

**Luke 17.20-37 (NRSV)**

20 Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you."

22 Then he said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 They will say to you, 'Look there!' or 'Look here!' Do not go, do not set off in pursuit. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. 25 But first he must endure much suffering and be rejected by this generation. 26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them. 28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, 29 but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them 30 — it will be like that on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day, anyone on the housetop who has belongings in the house must not come down to take them away; and likewise anyone in the field must not turn back. 32 Remember Lot's wife. 33 Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it. 34 I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 There will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken and the other left." 37 Then they asked him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

#### Context

In the big picture progression of Luke, Jesus is on the move to Jerusalem, where he will eventually arrive in 19:41. He has been teaching whenever given the opportunity, with the primary message being about the nature of the Kingdom, discipleship, and faith.

The passage is immediately before the story of Jesus healing of the 10 lepers. Now the Pharisees are asking when the kingdom will come. Luke records these two together with a certain amount of irony...

Note that this passage is Jesus' instruction to his disciples about how to live between the two Advents. Very fitting for our current study.

## Cross References

- Genesis 6-8. Days of Noah.
- Genesis 19. Days of Lot.
- Matthew 24:36-44. Note that the context in which Matthew places Jesus' words is the greater message of Matthew 24, which starts with Jesus prediction the destruction of the temple and his disciples asking him, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Note the emphasis is on the unexpected nature of the second coming and the fact that in the context of Matthew it is even more clear that Jesus is discussing the second coming in giving this warning.

<sup>36</sup> **"But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."** <sup>37</sup> For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, <sup>39</sup> and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. <sup>40</sup> Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>41</sup> Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. <sup>42</sup> **Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.** <sup>43</sup> But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. <sup>44</sup> **Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.**

- Also Cf. Mark 13 for parallels.
- Cf. Peter's speech in Acts 3, esp. 3.20-24, re: his amended understanding of the Day of the Lord as a Now/Not yet type of thing.

Historical Background<sup>1</sup>

- 17:20–21. Although Jewish people acknowledged that God ruled in the present, most especially longed for God's unchallenged rule, or kingdom in the future. Jewish teachers disputed when the kingdom would come: either at a set time unknown to mortals, or whenever all Israel repented. By teaching that the kingdom as God's reign is somehow present, Jesus implies that something of the kingdom—such as the messianic king—is already among them.
- 17:22. Jewish literature sometimes spoke of a future period called "the days of the Messiah." Some texts spoke of a period (sometimes forty years) when the Messiah would lead Israel in war against its enemies before the final end; others, that the Messiah would come to reign for a period after those enemies were subdued.

<sup>1</sup>Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament (Lk 17:20-37)*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

- 17:23–24. The ultimate coming of the kingdom would not be ushered in by just an earthly war (as some thought) but by a cosmic revelation to all the earth. (Various Jewish texts adopted either scenario.) “In his [Jesus’] day,” if original, may allude to the Old Testament “day of the Lord,” the final time when God would judge the earth and bring about eternal justice.
- 17:25. Cf. the context of Daniel 7:13–14 (the future Son of Man) for suffering preceding glory (in Dan 7:21–22, referring to the saints).
- 17:26–27. Jewish literature often used Noah’s generation as a typical image of evil. None of the activities Jesus mentions here is evil (though Jewish teachers regarded some as necessary responses to the evil impulse); the crime of these people is simply that they ignore the most important issue.
- 17:28–30. Many Jewish texts used Sodom (Gen 19) as a typical image of evil (cf. comment on Lk 10:12) and often linked it with Noah’s generation (cf. comment on 17:26–27).
- 17:31. The flat rooftop was used for a variety of purposes. Because the stairs from the rooftop led down the outside wall of the house, not inside, one need not go inside when descending. This is an image of haste: of forgetting possessions, property and worldly concerns to get to the street and greet the returning king, or to flee impending doom.
- 17:32–33. When Lot’s wife looked back to her destroyed home in Sodom, it cost her her life, which had been of greater value to God than her possessions (Gen 19:15–16, 26).
- 17:34. The Greek language used masculine pronouns if any members of the group were male; thus the “two” likely refers to husband and wife. Here Jesus undoubtedly refers to one being taken to judgment (as in an analogous second-century story about Israelites and Egyptians in bed during the last plague).
- 17:35. Part of the Palestinian Jewish woman’s work was grinding at a mill; she would often do this with another woman. These women could normally work together regardless of religious convictions. Provided that the unreligious woman was not violating Pharisaic rules, even the wife of a Pharisee and the wife of a non-tither (whom Pharisees despised) could grind together.
- 17:37. The Son of Man’s coming would bring judgment as on Noah’s and Lot’s generations (17:26–30), leaving his enemies as food for vultures (Ezek 32:4–6; 39:17–20), which Jewish people considered a horrible fate (Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:44; Ps 79:2). Some commentators have suggested that the “eagles” here refer instead to the Roman standards, which could be represented thus. In a.d. 70 the Romans offered sacrifice to these standards on the site of the temple after they had destroyed it.

## Message Outline: Living with the End in mind

1. Reading of the passage

2. Opening: End times can create fear/ not Jesus' intention
  - a. Rapture moments in high school
  - b. Lark News Rapture Safety Cards
  - c. Disagreement vs. Division
3. 17.20\_21 (Pharisees/Kingdom)
  - a. Context? 10 lepers healed!
4. 17.22\_25 (Disciples/ Days of Son of Man)
5. Jewish expectation vs. Church expectation (From Fee & Stuart's "How to Read the Bible for All it is Worth")

<b>This age</b>	<b>Age to come (Messianic age, Kingdom of God)</b>
Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sin</li> <li>• Sickness</li> <li>• Demon possession</li> <li>• Evil men triumph</li> </ul>	Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presence of the Spirit (Joel 2.28)</li> <li>• Righteousness (Isa. 11.4_5)</li> <li>• Health (Zech. 13.1; Isa. 53.5)</li> <li>• Peace (Isa. 2.2-4)</li> <li>• New covenant (Jer. 31 &amp; 32)</li> </ul>

6. 17.26\_27 (Days of Noah)
7. 17.28\_30 (Days of Lot)
  - a. Discuss the salvation offered in the days of Noah and Lot as being one of Grace with God as the hero.
8. 17.31\_33 (Lot's wife)
9. 17.34\_37 (50/50)
  - a. Andrea leaving the house
10. What do we know?
  - a. Jesus will return
  - b. The timing of the return will be a surprise

- c. The scope of the return will be cosmic
- d. But first... he must suffer
- e. The return will be accompanied by a separation
- f. Those separated will experience complete destruction or merciful rescue
- g. We must not ignore the Biblical teaching re: end times- what we believe about the future greatly affects the way we live. Like the illustration Tri used a few weeks ago about two men in identical situations with different expectations of what their compensation will be at the end of the year.