

Luke 17:20-18:8

Chapter 17

Verses 20-21: 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; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

--The Pharisees approach Jesus with the question that is on everyone's mind as Jesus is traveling to Jerusalem. There is a heightened anticipation around Jesus' role as the coming Messiah and the Jewish expectation of a visible earthly kingdom.

Luke 19:11: Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

--In response, Jesus lets them know that the kingdom of God was not coming *at that time* in the visual way that they were expecting. At that time, His kingdom was not of this world.

John 18:36: Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

--Jesus' first mission was to establish the kingdom of heaven within us. Jesus was securing the holy, righteous, and eternal life of the kingdom.

Romans 14:17: for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

--That is why He warns those listening not to believe anyone who claims they can point out the outward establishment of the kingdom of God somewhere on earth.

--**For the kingdom of God is within you.** . . . There is some debate as to the language in the Greek here. Does Jesus mean to say the kingdom of God is *among you* or *within you*?

--*Among you* would mean that Jesus was referring to Himself as the King in their presence and that they should have recognized Him as such. Jesus does say things like that elsewhere (**Lk. 9:27; 10:9-11; 11:20**).

--The problem with that line of interpretation is that in this interaction, Jesus is contrasting sight with something unseen. In those previous moments, Jesus is pointing out something obvious and visual. In this moment, Jesus' point is that the Pharisees cannot see what He is referring to.

--Jesus is saying you will not see the kingdom of God as it is now, because it is preached to you and must be received by faith. First, Christ came to establish His kingdom within us. Second, Christ will come again and establish His kingdom among us.

--Jesus had already said as much to one of the Pharisees' greatest teachers.

***John 3:3+6-7: Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"**

--Some wonder how Jesus can say the kingdom is within them when the Pharisees clearly do not believe in Him? For Jesus to say ***the kingdom of God is within you*** doesn't mean that it is in them personally at that very moment. It simply means that is where the kingdom is being established in anyone at the present time. *Very much like Jesus speaking with Nicodemus.*

Verses 22-25: 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. And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. 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. But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

--(22-23) Jesus now turns His attention to His disciples, and warns them that they too will one day hope to ***see one of the days of the Son of Man***. As His disciples, we too want to see His kingdom come and His will done on earth as it is in heaven.

--He warns the disciples not to believe any wild claims about His coming, and not to follow anyone making such claims. How true those words have become!

--Various religious claim Jesus has returned spiritually like: Bahai Faith; Jehovah's Witnesses teach Jesus returned in 1914; numerous individuals have set dates that proved false; and numerous individuals claim to be Jesus returned or reincarnated:

-Sergei Torop, founder of Church of the Last Testament

-A.J. Miller, leader of the Divine Truth movement

-Alvaro Thais, a Brazilian reincarnation of Christ known as Inri Cristo

-Eastern Lightning, The Church of the Almighty God, claims Jesus returned as a Chinese woman

-Apollo Quiboloy, founder of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in the Philippines, claims messianic status

--Unfortunately, the list could go on almost endlessly between false teachers and their various cults. If anyone claims Jesus has returned, or to be the returned Jesus, then hear the true Son of Man's words: ***Do not go after them or follow them!***

--(24) Here, Jesus gives His followers the first of two very clear and unmistakable signs of His actual return.

--When the Son of Man comes ***in His day***, it will be as obvious ***as the lightning that flashes*** and illuminates the entire night sky. The actual return of the actual Christ will be recognized by the entire world, whether they want to or not!

--(25) To make sure they don't misunderstand Him, Jesus again makes it clear that His suffering and rejection will come before His glory and reign.

Verses 26-30: *And as it was in the day of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 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. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.*

--Before addressing the direct context, I would just like to make the subtle point that once again, we see Jesus believes in a historical Noah, flood, Lot, Sodom, judgment, etc., and as His disciples, we too should believe all that the Scriptures say. *There are always going to be some intelligent Christian men and women saying stupid things like Adam & Eve, Jonah, the flood, etc., are all just stories.*

--Here is the second sign Jesus gives His disciples to inform them about the true nature of His Second Coming. The sign is that of clear, dividing, divine judgment.

--Notice in both examples, four things are repeated:

- 1) People lived normal lives, unbelieving and unprepared for the return of Christ and subsequent judgment.
- 2) Noah and Lot are delivered. ***Noah entered the ark. . . Lot went out of Sodom. . .***
- 3) Undeniable and inescapable divine judgment came on the rest: ***destroyed them all. . . destroyed them all. . .***
- 4) The judgment was swift. ***Until the day. . . but on the day. . .***

--(30) The sign is clear. On the day the Son of Man returns to establish His visible kingdom, the entire world will face clear, swift, and inescapable divine judgment. Like His appearance, there will be no denying it (**2 Thess. 1:3-10**).

--(I would just like to make another incidental point here that this section of Scripture clearly teaches the very opposite of those who claim that Christianity will win the world before the Second Coming of Christ. The post-millennial return of Christ is clearly unbiblical and therefore harmful to the pure motives of Christian life by an overemphasis on the reclamation of this world's life and structures.)

Verses 31-37: *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. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 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. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.*

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."

--(31-33) *In that day*. . . Jesus is warning about a different time than He is with *In that night* (34). The day Jesus is referring to is the time of the days of Noah and Lot, the difficult days before His Second Coming, when His disciples will long for Him as they face trials and temptations.

--The housetop typically has a stairway or ladder to reach the roof. Jesus warns that person not to turn back for any material goods. The worker in the field was not to turn back for any new clothes or goods left behind.

--The warning here is given as well in **Mt. 24:17-18 & Mk. 13:15-16** in direct relation to the coming judgment of Jerusalem in 70AD. Though, Christ clearly expands it to all disciples through the ages in verses **32-33**.

--(32) Lot's wife heard of the coming judgment, from angel's no less, and was still so caught up in the material nature of this life that she disobeyed God's warnings and turned back from salvation to Sodom. She was turned into a pillar of salt either supernaturally, or by lagging.

Many ancient writers (Josephus; Philo of Alexandria; Pliny the Elder; Strabo; Eusebius; Origen; etc.) mention she was still visible!

--Lot's wife becomes a warning to disciples of Christ who have His truth and His warnings but are still attached to this world.

--Lot's wife teaches us to beware. Our hearts may be attached to the world despite our bodies moving in the opposite direction—at least for a time. Our religion cannot be going through the motions, or to satisfy a husband, wife, family, or culture.

--Also, beware of imagining we will live in the custom of our age without Christ's return!

--(33) The only true deliverance for us is total surrender to Jesus Christ. I will never find life by trying to grasp it here in this world. I will only find life by losing my life in surrender to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

--(34-36) *I tell you, in that night*. . . is different than *that day*, because the night closes the day. The night is the very ending of the day, when the daytime is over. *That night* is the very moment that Jesus enacts the delineating judgment He has been speaking of. It is the day Noah entered the ark, and the day Lot left Sodom.

--The context here knows nothing of the rapture of the church. That type of interpretation is totally imported into the text. The context of waiting for God's judgment goes all the way through to **18:8**.

--Who are the taken? Those taken to judgment or deliverance? I believe the *taken* are those taken to judgment, not deliverance, because of Jesus' grim statement in **37**. Either way, it is the clear separation of judgment and deliverance that is Jesus' point.

--Jesus is describing the division of those judged and those delivered. The ultimate judgment of all men is something taught all through the Scriptures: Flood, Sodom, Angel of death, Jesus' parables of the wheat and chaff, sheep and goats, etc.

--The apostle Peter echoes Jesus' entire teaching here in **2 Peter 2**, even mentioning Noah and Lot again, and summing things up by saying: ***the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment (9).***

--**(37)** Granted, this is a very strange verse which has received various interpretations through the ages. I am giving it my shot, but I believe context helps us once again.

--The disciples ask: ***Where, Lord?*** I believe they are asking where those who are taken in judgment go. Jesus had just told them many would be taken. They ask where.

--I believe Jesus' cryptic response is a grim reference to the slaughter at His Second Coming. There we find the birds mentioned twice regarding the judgment of the Christ rejecting earth dwellers.

****Revelation 19:17-18+21: Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." . . . And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.****

Chapter 18

Verses 1-5: Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"

--**(1)** Jesus is speaking ***to them***. . . the disciples of **17:22**. Wonderfully, Luke tells us exactly why Jesus tells this parable. Jesus doesn't want His disciples losing heart, growing weary, and giving up on prayer.

--When Jesus tells us not to lose heart, He does so because He knows prayer is exactly the place where we are apt to lose heart! (Also, it makes for an interesting Bible study to survey the other situations where the NT exhorts us not to lose heart: **2 Cor. 4:1; 4:16; Gal. 6:9; Eph 3:13; 2 Thess. 3:13.**)

--I think there are three main reasons it is easy to lose heart praying.

--First, we don't always know why God waits to answer prayer or doesn't seem to respond. Persevering prayer is one of the greatest mysteries of our Christian life. Prayer is a "law" God instituted in His universe, but we don't always understand why that law is working the way it is working. *Similar to how we don't understand how many natural phenomena work, such as the northern lights, ball lightning, how animals precisely navigate using Earth's magnetic fields,

etc.*

--Secondly, the spiritual nature of prayer, opposed to the material or social benefits of other spiritual exercises, makes it one of the most difficult disciplines of the Christian life. Teaching the Bible, serving publicly, and playing on a worship team all have corresponding immediate gratification. Prayer lacks such public recognition and response.

--Third, is spiritual warfare. Prayer is powerful and one of our few spiritual weapons. Because of that power, Satan will do all he can to stop us from praying. Our adversary knows that one prayer can ruin something he has been building in a life for years!

--One thing Jesus does know. A praying heart is a living heart. A non-praying heart is a lost heart. Prayer will strengthen us. A lack of prayer will weaken us until we give up.

--(2) Jesus introduces us to a judge who cares nothing for God or the opinion of others.

--(3) Next, He introduces us to a widow who is seeking justice regarding a certain adversary.

--It is interesting how often the Scriptures speak about widows: **Ex. 22:22; Deut. 10:18; 1 Kings 17:9+12; Job 29:13; Ps. 68:5; 1 Tim. 5:3-16; etc.**

--(4-5) The widow knows she has no other option in dealing with her adversary than the judge. She doesn't have the power to deal with the situation on her own, but the judge does. Despite his resistance, she persists in demanding his involvement.

--It is also interesting to take note how the Lord happily places dependent widows before us as examples of leaning on Him.

Jeremiah 49:11: *Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me.*

Luke 2:37: *and this woman {Anna} was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

1 Timothy 5:5: *Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.*

--I encourage all widows to follow the call of the Lord, and the example of Anna and this widow of the parable, to trust God day and night with your prayers and to never lose heart!

Verses 6-8: *Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"*

--(6-7) Jesus is clearly contrasting what happened between the unjust judge and the persistent widow with God as Just Judge of all the earth and His troubled saints.

--God will **avenge** His own elect. Jesus uses the same Greek word used to refer to Christ's judgment in other places: **Rom. 12:19; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 10:30.**

--***though He bears long with them.*** . . . Our vengeance will not come before His own! His long-

suffering with sinners is not accidental. It is purposeful and planned.

2 Peter 3:9: *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

--(8) *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.* . . Means that when God does bring judgment, it will not be slow. It will happen fast, like the flood and the fire and brimstone that fell on Sodom. The unjust judge was slow. God will not be.

--*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?* Jesus makes it clear that the Son of Man is coming back to earth. The vengeance spoken of will happen then.

--The question Christ poses does not relate to His Second Coming or just vengeance. Those things are set. What is in question? The faith of His disciples at the time of His coming.

--The language gives us the sense of: *Will He really find the faith on the earth?* Will He find true, persistent, unflinching Christian faith like this widow? Will He find saints “praying through” despite their troubles? Or will He find a bunch of people who have lost hope in God and given up praying?

--May God, in His grace, find us as saints who have faith in Him, trust Him, and plead with Him to put things right! Is He our only hope?

--Heaven unashamedly pleads with the One on the throne.

Revelation 6:10: *How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

--What of earth? Will any still be praying: *Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven (Lk. 11:2)?*

--May we, as Jesus disciples in these last days, heed His instruction. *That men always ought to pray and not lose heart.*