

A Birds Eye View of the End Times

Luke 17:11–37 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: As we have said many times, the entire Old Testament was awaiting the arrival of a person. Remember in the garden, as God proclaimed a curse on mankind for heeding the word of Satan over the Word of God, He also proclaimed the Protoevangelium. The *proto-gospel*...that is the promise that one day everything that went wrong in Eden will be made right again, and it would happen through the seed of the woman, a male child that would crush the head of the serpent and be severely bruised in the process. NOW, you can follow that anticipation all throughout the OT.

- We see when God calls Abram to leave his family and go to a land he knew not of, that as Abram followed by faith, God entered into a covenant that through his seed, the entire earth would be blessed.
- We see the sons of promise, Isaac, then Jacob, and then of Jacob's sons is Judah, to whom the Scepter is promised.
- We see a descendant of Judah placed on the throne of Israel in David, and we are told that one of David's descendants will have an eternal throne.

So you see, this idea of an anticipated King is the major point of the OT. This ANOINTED of GOD, or MESSIAH that is to come and usher in an eternal kingdom.

Then it happens...

- You will remember that when the Angel **Gabriel** appears to Mary, he proclaimed that the Son she was to bear, would, "be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
- When **John the Baptist** came preaching in the wilderness, as the last of the Old Testament Prophets, when in prison he asked of Jesus, "Are you the ONE who was to come?" Which one? The seed of the woman, the son of Abraham, the Lion of Judah, the son of David, the Messiah? To which Jesus answered in the affirmative.

The ministry of Jesus was marked by this universal expectation that He was perhaps destined to usher in the eternal Kingdom. AND NOW, he was making his way toward Jerusalem. We are just a few weeks away from the triumphal entry at this point. Everything Jesus says and does is packed with meaning.

CONTEXT: As we come to chapter 17, we see what appears to be a prophetic overview of the coming Kingdom of God. Or as I call it - "A birds eye view of the end times".

IT BEGINS WITH A MIRACLE: It is important to recognize that miracles always have prophetic significance. Remember, when we read the Bible, we are reading an overview of God's interactions with mankind over the span of about 4,000 years. It is easy to read

the Bible and get the idea that miraculous interventions were normative throughout all of time. I mean, every story seems to have a miracle in it. But in actuality, they don't. The miracles get our attention as they should, but entire books of the Bible have no mention of the supernatural work of God.

Remember that every road has two ditches. For every mile of good road, you have two miles of ditch.

Believing miracles to be normative can lead to one of two errors:

1. Since we don't see them on a normative level today, we tend to disbelieve they ever happened at all. This is the error of the logical *liberals*.
2. If we think they were normative for all times, we can be tempted to falsify the miracle and help God out from time to time. This is the error of some of the *televangelists*.

The reality is that the miracles were NORMATIVE on 4 Occasions.

1. The time of Moses and Joshua
2. The time of Elijah and Elisha
3. The time of Christ and the Apostles
4. The Last Days when two prophets will arise

So, anytime you see a major miraculous intervention, recognize that it was spectacular because it was unusual. It was a ***signal that a major Kingdom advancement*** was taking place... the *New Heaven* and *New Earth* were spilling over onto the current age. That is why when Jesus fed the 5,000 it was so significant... not just that it was a miracle, but that it was a sense of how life would be during the reign of Christ.

NOW REMEMBER, the chapter divisions of your Bible were added by editors to help us all be in the same portion of Luke, but they are not inspired. Generally, they are helpful, but at times they separate segments that should be considered together. That is why I begin in chapter 17, verse 11.

We see a healing that points toward a...

1. Redirected Kingdom

TEXT: Luke 17:11–37 (ESV)

¹¹ “On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance”.

We've talked about the nature of leprosy before. This was a communicable disease. The Mosaic law forbids those with leprosy from coming into contact with healthy people. They lived outside the camp, they were not permitted to worship, they were to announce to any healthy person they came in contact with that they were “unclean”.

¹³ “and lifted up their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us’.”

No doubt they had heard of Jesus' miraculous ability to heal and they were hoping that he would have mercy. That word for mercy means, "Don't do this because we deserve it, but rather, look on our estate and be moved with empathy and compassion to help us. It's a powerful word. It is the same thing we must do when we realize that we are spiritual lepers.

We can contribute nothing to our healing; we simply must cry out to God for mercy.

¹⁴ "When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests'. And as they went they were cleansed."

The Law of Moses recognized that perhaps God might heal people from time to time. Thus, it made provision for re-entry into the covenant community. The healed leper would present himself to a priest; a sacrifice would be made, and then the individual could resume his normal life.

Remember, these men had been banished from the place of worship for many years. No doubt, they longed to see the Temple of God again, all but one...

¹⁵ "Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; ¹⁶ and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan."

So 10 were healed, but only one gave glory to God, and the text tells us he was a Samaritan. As a Samaritan, he could not enter the temple complex; the Samaritans were half-breed Jews, and they were despised by the Jewish community. But this man had been healed.. and he fell at Jesus' feet and gave thanks.

¹⁷ "Then Jesus answered, 'Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' ¹⁹ And he said to him, 'Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well'."

So, while all encountered the King and received blessings from the King, only one responded to Him as the King.

This serves to remind us of the Kingdom motif, that Jesus, the King, would come unto His own, yet His own would receive Him not. We see here a glimpse of what was taking place between Jesus and the Jewish People.

This is what was spoken of by the Apostle Paul in Romans 11. From the time of Abraham until the time of Christ, God's people were PRIMARILY the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were like natural limbs on the Olive Tree of the Kingdom.

Then Jesus came unto His own, the Jews, and His own received Him not.

Thus, Paul tells us that he broke off the natural branches, and grafted in the wild branches, the Gentiles. Thus today, the vast majority of people who follow Christ as Lord, are Gentiles.

But then the day is coming when the Gentiles will be removed, and the natural will be grafted back in. Hold that thought for a moment and we will come back to it.

So, there is a redirected Kingdom... that happened, you are in that now.

2. Rejected King

²⁰ “Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you’.”

So first, Jesus says, the spreading of the Kingdom will not happen like you are expecting. The King will not ride in on a white horse and slay His enemies, at least, not yet. It will begin subtly, quietly; in fact, it is already in your midst.

You see, the Kingdom is where the King is. In another place, Jesus said, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” That is, you may reach out and touch it.

So, the King is here, and because of that, you may enter the Kingdom. Now, he doesn’t say the Kingdom will enter you; don’t over-spiritualize this. Liberals have historically reduced the influence of the Kingdom to an internal heart issue only by taking this verse to mean it's internal things. That’s not what Jesus is saying. Rather, Jesus is saying... the Kingdom’s influence is perpetual; it’s all around in your midst.

That is how it is to be. You have various kingdoms throughout history since the time of Christ, but no matter where on Earth or when in time... the Kingdom of Christ has been there in their midst... awaiting the time of consummation.

²² “And he said to the disciples,

(Notice that he had been talking to the Pharisees, now He turns his attention to his disciples.)

“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. ²³ And they will say to you, ‘Look, there!’ or ‘Look, here!’ Do not go out or follow them. 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 suffer many things and be rejected by this generation”.

Repeatedly, Jesus has warned this of his coming death and resurrection. This had to happen; it was part of the plan. Then, there will be a time of separation - we know this as the *Church Age* when Jesus will not be here physically but will go to prepare a place for us. During that time, there will be many false Christs and anti-Christs that will arise and seek to mislead... but when Jesus actually comes, there will be no mistaking. It will be like lightening in the sky.

A Redirected Kingdom, a Rejected King

3. Repeated History

Jesus says, the final days will be much like previous times when God has stepped into history for judgement. He mentions two specifically.

THE DAYS OF NOAH

²⁶ “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it 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 when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

THE DAYS OF LOT

“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 when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— ³⁰ so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

There are at least FOUR similarities between the experience of those two patriarchs and the last days.

A. Rampant Immorality

The time of Noah and the time of Lot were each marked by a time of great wickedness.

During Noah’s time we read, **Genesis 6:5 (ESV)**

⁵ “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Genesis 6 also tells us there was a distinctly demonic element to the immorality. This is where we read of the **Nephalim**, a human demon halfbreed that was on the earth.

The same was true of Sodom and Gomorrah just before judgment fell. Remember, two angels visited Lot to warn him to leave, but as the angels entered the city, a gang of people gathered, seeking to rape them.

We also read in **Genesis 6:11 (ESV)**,

¹¹ “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.”

In the same way - **Matthew 24:12 (ESV)**, “that the love of many will grow cold and lawlessness will increase.”

Consider these trends:

1. Crime Rates: Violent crimes are at an all-time high. Homicides increased by 29% in 2020, and have continued at that level.

2. Drug Abuse: The opioid epidemic has led to a dramatic increase in overdose deaths. Statistics showing increased use of marijuana, cocaine, and synthetic drugs.

3. Pornography: is now a \$97 billion dollar industry worldwide. Pornhub reports over 6 million new videos added each year.

4. Family Structure: The idea of the nuclear family is becoming extinct. No longer is there a predictable family unit of a mom and dad, a number of kids... a sharp increase in cohabitation, out of wedlock births, broken homes, and “alternative relationships” have spiked.

5. Abortion Rates: Since the repeal of Roe v. Wade in June 2022, the number of abortions in the United States has actually increased, contrary to some expectations. In the first three months of 2023, more than 100,000 abortions were recorded in a single month for the first time.

Now, we could go on and on, but you know these things to be true, you see it daily.

Ruth Graham once said, *“If God doesn’t judge this world eventually, He is going to owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology.”*

But, note what Jesus says next... not only will there be, rampant immorality,

B. Routine Living

²⁷ *“They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,*

²⁸ *Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,”*

There was a sense of normalcy in all of this. People are more wicked than ever before, but life goes on as if nothing has changed. Even when some preacher talks about it, some will think he’s lost his mind! You will hear people saying, “look at all the progress in recent years!”

So at a time like that... when immorality is rampant and people consider it just part of the routine... we see....

C. Removed Church

In both stories of Noah and Lot, the faithful are removed and preserved from God's Judgment. I believe this refers to what theologians refer to as the RAPTURE.

Someone always says, “Pastor, the word *rapture* is not in the Bible”. They are correct, but it was a word created to describe a theological concept that we clearly see in the

Bible. It's like the word Trinity. The word isn't in there, but the concept is. BTW, the word *bible* isn't in the Bible. I like what Bob Pitman said, "Collard greens aren't in the Bible, but I love to eat 'em".

- In **2 Thessalonians 2:1 (ESV) Paul writes**, ¹“Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him...” In Greek, that is ***episunagoy***. It's the word from which the Jews got the word “synagogue”. It means a gathering together.
- Or **1 Thess. 4:17**, Paul refers to it in the Greek the ***Harpazo***, means snatched away, translated in the LATIN as *rapturo*, from which we get the word rapture.

NOW, every Bible believer believes in this sudden and dramatic resurrection of the living and dead. ***The disagreement is over when it occurs.***

I am of the opinion that this will happen prior to the 7 years of tribulation.

There are a few reasons for this.

1. The pattern of Scripture is removal before Judgement.
2. The imminent language of the NT - this could happen at any minute, like a thief. If we have to wait 7 years, we will see it coming.
3. The lack of instruction as to how to survive the Tribulation.
4. The encouraging hope of the 2nd Coming.

Every time the 2nd Coming is taught to believers, it is presented in glowing terms or delight. If we had to endure the 7 worse years that ever hit the earth... I'm not sure that would be something to look forward to.

- “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (**Phil. 3:20 NASB**)
- “Training us to ... live sober, upright, and Godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” (**Titus 2:12–13**)
- “Encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near”. (**Heb. 10:25**)

The Second Coming for us is not something to fear, but a HOPE-filled event.

Alexander McLaren- The primitive church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death or about heaven. ***They were watching not for the undertaker but for the uppertaker.***

Rampant Immorality, Routine Living, Removed Church

D. Rapid Judgement

Now, get the context: the church is removed, and the tribulation is beginning. Also, remember that the Jewish community is being rapidly grafted back into Christ, spiritually.

³¹ “On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.
³² Remember Lot’s wife. ³³ Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.”

³⁴ “I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. ³⁵ There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.”

Now, the wording of this passage has reference not to the rapture, but to being taken in Judgement. Then He gives this enigmatic proverb in verse 37...

³⁷ “And they said to him, ‘Where, Lord?’. He said to them, ‘Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather’.”

Vultures are scavengers; they feed on death. When sin is glorified and magnified, it will attract those who feed on it. Like vultures, they will feast on the rot. So where will the Judgement fall most severely? In those places that glorify that which leads to death, those which feed on death will gather.

INVITATION/CONCLUSION: Inevitably, someone will say to me, “Pastor, when I see all these signs the Bible talks about taking place, I will get saved”. But, friend, that is simply not how it works. You see, you get saved when the Holy Spirit is drawing you or you do not get saved at all. The Bible tells us that soon after the tribulation begins, something dramatic will take place.

2 Thessalonians 2:10–12 (ESV)

¹⁰ “and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

In this way, the vast majority of Gentiles who are not saved when the tribulation begins, will never be converted. In other words, mercy has its limits. This is a day of grace - the leper can be healed... but make peace with the Son for when the tribulation begins, there is little time.