

Luke 17:20-37 An Invisible Kingdom Defined

Monday's Washington Post – "Haitians implore US to 'take over.'

In light of the recent earthquake there "...

These people are so desperate, they don't really care who is control, so long as they can just eat and be safe, so they are looking to America, to this kingdom, if you will, for help. IT's a completely understandable plea on a physical level.

many people want to be citizens of America, whether it's to have stuff, or freedom, or just enough to survive. But, as the article points out America, as great as it is, can't do everything for everyone.

This morning we are going to take a look at a different kingdom, the Kingdom of God, a government that many people were also looking to, expecting that when it came, all their problems would be solved, but we will learn from Jesus that this Kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms – in fact, it is radically different from them.

[20](#)Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to 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." [\[fn8\]](#)

The Kingdom of God

1. Is not coming in from somewhere else on the horizon to take over by force; it's already here, you just don't recognize it, because it's not the kind of kingdom you would expect – it's not going to take over by force and you have to want to be included in it.
 - i. Think about it - you're already standing in the presence of the King. And if Jesus wanted to launch a hostile takeover, He could have dropped down from Heaven with a few thousand angels, done a little angelic airborne assault, and taken over.

Consider what He said the night He was arrested as He describes the power He has:

Matt 26:47 – this in the Garden of Gethsemane, after the last supper, at the moment Jesus is taken into custody before He is eventually tried and put to death:

1. Matt 26:[47](#)While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.[48](#)Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him."[49](#)And he came up to Jesus at once and said,

“Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed him.⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” ^[fn6] Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him.⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant ^[fn7] of the high priest and cut off his ear.⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.⁵³ **Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?**⁵⁴ But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?”

A little later, at His trial before Pontius Pilate, He again claimed to access to Heavenly armies and explained more about the nature of His kingdom:

2. John 18: ³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?”³⁶ Jesus answered, “**My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.**”³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.”

He tells Pilate “My kingdom is not of this world.” Jesus is not trying to establish a ‘Christian’ nation. He wants **nations of Christian people** instead – and that is a VERY important distinction. He desires people who are loyal and committed to Him on a personal, individual, basis.

- b. So Jesus has not been out training an army or massing His forces, He is not putting together a strategy to take things over from the outside by force. You won’t see an army approaching on the horizon, He isn’t going to mount up on a white stallion and lead the charge against the Roman garrison in Jerusalem; He is going to enter in humbly on a donkey seeking those who recognize what He is doing.

- c. This is the exact opposite of the way most other religious kingdoms try to take over. They want to take the mass, to swallow the whole population, and claim them as adherents.
 - i. During Jesus' time and afterwards, **Jewish** zealots and others tried to overthrow the Romans through guerilla tactics and direct confrontations so they could have the land back and everyone could be 'Jewish.'
 - 1. But the OT is full of people who were ethnically and religiously 'Jewish' yet who did not love God.
 - a. You see, you don't become holy by immersion or osmosis – just declaring everyone to be something doesn't make it so.
 - ii. Extremist **Islam** makes the same mistake – it also says we will take you over and convert you by force.
 - 1. If the head of a household is Muslim, the whole family is counted as Muslim.
 - 2. If you live in an Islamic republic, you are counted as a Muslim.
 - a. Countries like Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran and others list themselves as 98 to 99.7% Muslim. No Christian nation even comes close because in Christianity, you must CHOOSE, individually, to be named a Christian, no one can thrust the title on you on the basis of your citizenship.
 - iii. The same problem is found in **Hinduism** as well. For years now extremist Hindus have been beating up, bombing, kidnapping, and lynching both Muslims and Christians in India out of the fear that these 'foreign' religions are taking people away from Hinduism which depends on a rigid system of social classes, or castes, to keep things moving along. When you are born into the kingdom of Hinduism, you automatically take your place in a system – whether you are born into a high level position or a low level position, there is no going back, no moving up or down, at least in this life. You're stuck where you are until the next go around.
 - 1. But when people leave Hinduism for the Kingdom of God they are freed from their caste – whether it was high or low, and now learn that in Christ all men and women are equal: equally sinners, but equally saved.
 - iv. The Communists tried to something similar but from the opposite direction, they tried to proclaim that no one in their kingdoms had any religion, they were officially atheists. But that didn't work either. As countries like Russia and China have opened up to the West we have seen a church that went underground to avoid the Communist authorities but still survived, and now many others are interested in Christianity as well –

the church is vibrant and growing in both countries today – **because people want to** enter the Kingdom of God.

The KoG is filled with loyal volunteers, we give our allegiance to Him, we are not conscripted, we are wooed.

“It is His kindness that leads to repentance.”

- d. Love is strongest and most genuine when it is freely given, not forced or coerced.
 - i. That doesn't mean it is always a feeling, love is a commitment, but it is a commitment you **freely** make.
 1. Consider the oath of office that many of you in the military or government service have taken: “I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; **that I take this obligation freely**, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God.”
 2. Generally, you choose to work harder at commitments you freely make than on those that are imposed on you.

And all of this explains why Jesus is doing things the way He is doing them –He is trying to win hearts, not break backs. So the Kingdom was already breaking through, people were already entering in, BY CHOICE.

Jesus will come one day, to rule with a rod of iron and to overthrow all of those who refuse to bow their knees to His authority, but in this, His first coming, He is most interested in picking up those of us who have fallen, and allowing us the chance, *out of grateful appreciation for His love and mercy*, to freely enslave ourselves to Him; to enlist in His army, to take up citizenship in His kingdom, **because we want to**, not because we had to.

[22](#)And he said to the 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.

One day, Jesus will return, but it won't be by stealth. When He returns, everyone will know it.

Lots of people have claimed to be Jesus or sent by Him. One theologian I read has tracked 64 false Messiahs – big ones, not just the nut down on the mall with his shopping cart for a throne – men who have attracted followings, including just within recent times, Sun Myung Moon and his ‘moonie’ cult, Jim Jones who led 900 of his followers in one of the largest mass suicides in

history at Jonestown in Guyana; and Branch Davidian David Koresh who died with his followers after barricading themselves against the FBI in Waco, Texas.

Each of these tragedies could have been avoided if people had just read their Bibles. We place a lot of value in Biblical Literacy in Calvary Chapel. We are committed to teaching through the whole Bible, verse by verse because we need to know the whole thing, we need to know how to check out stuff that seems weird *on our own*, we need to know how to study *on our own*, and never blindly trust the words of some charismatic leader.

And we see here, *in the Bible*, that Jesus said if people say “He’s over here, or over there, or I’m Him” don’t believe it, because when He returns you will know it.

[25](#)But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

No Cross – No kingdom.

This is absolutely incredible when you stop and look at it. Jesus is saying, look, I’ve come to save people, to make a way for those who are outside of God’s presence to enter in, to come into His kingdom, but as I do it, I’ve got to suffer and be rejected.

The fact that He came in the first place is remarkable, but to come knowing that He would be rejected and persecuted by the very people He was saving, that blows your mind.

It is this kind of demonstration of love that wins us over, that makes us loyal to Him, that makes us want to say, “yes, I give my allegiance to you. I don’t have to be conscripted, or forced in at gunpoint, I’m not interested in dodging the draft – **I want in**. If this is how you treat those who look upon you as an enemy, how much better must you treat those you call your friends?”

Yet, as Jesus warns, not everyone wants to receive the salvation He offers and so He warns what life will be like when He finally returns to usher in judgment on those who have consistently rejected Him:

[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.[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 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.

In other words, the days before the Second Coming of Christ will be filled with oblivious indulgence, just as the days before the destruction of the world through the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. People lived their lives going around, doing their own thing, pursuing their own goals, trying to live it up, or party it up, or climb up the ladder, but giving no thought to God and righteousness.

[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.

Here Jesus gives some instruction regarding our conduct in light of His return and judgment.

He's speaking in light of Noah's flood and says if you're already on top of your house when the judgment comes – when the rain starts falling, don't go back down inside of it to try save some of your stuff. And in light of Lot's wife – if the city is being destroyed, don't turn around and look longingly upon the things you have left behind. Rejoice in your salvation, realize and embrace the fact that the salvation you are receiving is of far greater value than the stuff you are leaving behind.

Sometimes our 'stuff' can get a hold of us; it can start to pull us. We all need to be reminded from time to time, as Job said, that 'naked I came into this world, naked I will leave.'

It's one thing to think of what you might save if your house caught on fire and you had the chance to get in and back out again, but we're talking here about eternal destruction. It's a warning to us not to get held down by the things of this world, not to be possessed by our possessions, not to consider anything more valuable than being with Jesus.

[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." [\[fn10\]](#)
[37](#)And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse [\[fn11\]](#) is, there the vultures [\[fn12\]](#) will gather."

There are two ways to interpret this, and there are great opinions on either side. You could look at this as saving that the righteous will be taken away and the unrighteous will be left behind for judgment in this case it would be like the rapture. Or, you could say that the wicked will be taken away to judgment and the righteous will be left – which is it? I don't know, but I feel like I'm in very good company in admitting that. There are definitely some portions of Scripture that leave us scratching our heads, **and that's OK**, if you try too hard to answer every question, you wind up coming up with some bad answers.

So, what should we take away from all of this?

Well, since the KoG is among us, we need to stop looking for another king (you can only serve one anyone) don't look for a spouse, a job, an assignment, a house, a car, or a toy – worship and serve the King who has already come – give Him your total allegiance, and don't look back on what you have to leave behind in order to follow Him.

Then, *as you follow Him*, set yourself to the task and don't worry about when you will go home to meet Him or when He will return for you – when those things happen, you'll know. Until then, you keep serving the king in the place He has put you.

Let's pray -

Lord we thank you for our citizenship in America, we thank you for the freedoms that we enjoy here, we thank you for all the freedoms, prosperity, and privileges you allow us to have here. But we thank you most of all for our citizenship in the Kingdom of God – and we ask that you would show us how to use our American citizenship as we grow in our Kingdom citizenship – that we would use those freedoms, prosperity, and privileges to grow in our relationship with you, and to make your name known around the world.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen