

**When
Will the
Millennial
Kingdom
Appear?
Luke 17:20-37**

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LUKE CHAPTER 17:20-37

The Pharisees asked:

When will the kingdom appear?

Jesus replied:

It won't be seen in the near future.

Behold, the kingdom of God is among you!

(i.e. The King is here!)

To the disciples Jesus said:

The days shall come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it

When they say, See here; or see there: go not after them, nor follow them...

For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of one part of heaven, shineth unto the other part of heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

SIGNS OF WHEN THE KINGDOM IS NEAR

And as it was in the days of Noe...

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...

even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

There shall be two in one bed...

two shall be grinding together...

two shall be in the field;

the one shall be taken and the other left

The disciples asked, Where, Lord?

Jesus answered, Wheresoever the (living) body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

"The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air (1Thess.4:16-17).

When Will the Kingdom Appear?

John R. Ecob D.D.

In Luke chapter 17 we read about the healing of ten lepers; one of them a Samaritan. The miracle had been witnessed by a group of Pharisees who must have been impressed. Jesus had sent the healed lepers to the priests at the Temple to be declared clean according to the Law when one of them turned back and loudly glorified God. The leper who returned however, was the Samaritan and this provided a complication in the minds of the Pharisees. But how could they complain about such an act of mercy? Perhaps they were embarrassed that a Samaritan could be so blessed and glorify God; they immediately changed the subject to conceal their embarrassment and asked "*when the kingdom of God should come?*"

The Pharisees believed Messiah would be able to do miracles. If Jesus was Messiah, then He must **also** establish His kingdom with Israel at the head of the nations. The political implications were vast, for the Romans controlled Israel and the known world as far away as Britain. Hence the question, "When will the kingdom of God appear?"

Jesus' Answer to the Pharisees

Jesus gave a brief answer to the Pharisees then He turned to His disciples and provided them with the detailed answer. To the Pharisees He said,

*"The kingdom of God cometh **NOT** with observation: **NEITHER** shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you"* (Luke 17:20-21).

It is obvious that these Pharisees were not believers and therefore it would be quite incorrect to say that the kingdom of God was WITHIN THEM. It would also be inconsistent with many prophecies to say that the promised kingdom of God would **not** be a literal and visible kingdom that could be observed. The word translated "*observation*" is para-tereseos meaning "near-see", or "see in the near view" and the words "*within you*"

would better be translated, *“in the midst of all of you”* or *“among you”*. Jesus told them that they would not be able to say, “See here it is”, or, “See there it is!” because the kingdom was going to be deferred.

Jesus said to Nicodemus,

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”
(John 3:5).

The New Birth is a New Covenant experience which was not possible under the Old Covenant and neither was entry into the kingdom of God possible to Old Testament saints. The New Birth awaited Christ’s death and resurrection and involved the indwelling Holy Spirit who was not given until Pentecost. On this basis alone, it would not make sense to say that the Pharisees were already **in the kingdom** of God or that the kingdom of God was **“within”** them.

The Pharisees were too blind to recognize the King of Israel **in their midst** and so the Lord had nothing more to say to them. He had already told the disciples, *“it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given”* (Matt.13:11).

A paraphrase of the Lord’s answer to the Pharisees would be,
“The kingdom of God will not be seen in the ‘near future’ in its visible form and none of you will be able to say, ‘See here is the kingdom, for behold, the king is among you now’ (and you reject Him)”.

Jesus’ Words to the Disciples

*“And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and **YE SHALL NOT SEE IT**. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them”* (Luke 17:22-23).

The disciples were Jews and they looked for the kingdom to be restored to Israel as they later indicated on the Mount of Olives:
“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”
(Acts 1:6).

At this stage the disciples had no concept of the Church being Jews and Gentiles in one body. The mystery of the Church remained a secret until revealed to Paul (Eph.3:1-9).

Jesus warned the disciples that there would come false prophets and false Christs from among the Jews and He didn't want the disciples to think that any of these were genuine so He said, "*Go not after them*" (Luke 17:23). When He returned He would **not** be leading His followers out in the wilderness as Theudas, or Judas of Galilee did (Acts5:36-37), but He would come **visibly in the heavens in power and great glory. He said:**

"For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day" (Luke 17:24).

Let us remember the question Jesus was answering:

*"**When** will the kingdom of God appear?"*

There have been many false Christs through the centuries but none have been

"revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Therss.1:7-8).

Bar-Kochbar was proclaimed Messiah and his army occupied Palestine for more than two years but he was only a man and was finally slain by the Romans at Bether near Jerusalem in AD135.

The kingdom of God will be established on earth but only when the Lord personally and visibly descends from heaven at the end of the age.

The Disciples Would NOT See the Kingdom

1) Jesus said to His disciples,

*"Ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and **YE SHALL NOT SEE IT**"* (Luke 17:22).

The Lord was preparing His disciples for the **hidden Church Age** and indicated **His coming to reign would be deferred**. This passage is one of the few in the Gospels that indicates there would be a delay in establishing the kingdom during which time

God would “take out of them (the Gentiles) a people for His name” (Acts 15:14).

Five Events Must Precede the Kingdom

Five events must occur BEFORE the Lord would return and establish the kingdom.

1) Christ must be rejected by that generation of Jews and go to the cross, suffer, and die for the sins of the world.

“BUT FIRST must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation” (Luke 17:25).

2) An evil world, similar to the days of Noah, must be judged after the godly remnant is removed:

*“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, **UNTIL THE DAY** that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:26-27) .*

3) The world must become sinful like the city of Sodom before God removed righteous Lot and burned Sodom and all the cities of the plain of Jordan.

*“Likewise also as it was **in the days of Lot**; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But **THE SAME DAY that Lot went out of Sodom** it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Luke 17:28-30).*

4) There will be great Tribulation and the Jews will have to flee from Jerusalem:

“In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it” (Luke 17:31-33).

Jesus repeated this warning when He described the Great Tribulation in the Olivet Discourse. He said:

“Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matt. 24:16).

5) There will be the sudden, global disappearance of individuals from earth:

*"I tell you, in that night there shall be **two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left**" (Luke 17:34-36).*

The word translated "taken" (paralambano) in the original language means "to receive to one's self" and the word translated "left" (aphiemi) means, "to put away" as a man would put away his wife in divorce (1Cor.7:11).

Consistent with the signs of Noah and Lot, the righteous will be "taken", or **received to Christ's own self**, while those that are "left" on earth will **remain to suffer the judgment of the Great Tribulation.**

The departure of the righteous must be **BEFORE** the Tribulation begins for the angels told Lot,

"Haste thee, escape thither; for I CANNOT DO ANYTHING TILL thou be come thither" (Gen.19:22).

The disciples knew nothing about the Church or the Rapture of the Church at this stage so they were puzzled as to where those who were "taken" would go, and so they asked,

"Where Lord?" (Luke 17:37).

Jesus said:

"Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (Luke 17:37).

The word translated "body" is **NOT "carcase"** (ptoma) but "a living, saving, body" (soma from sozo - I save). Just as eagles spiral upward to the heavens, so at the Rapture, *"the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to **meet the Lord in the air**" (1Thess 4:16-17).*

When will the kingdom appear? It will occur when the Lord returns in flaming fire to judge the nations. Before that day, there will be a time of Great Tribulation **after** the righteous are removed to meet the Lord in the air. The Rapture must therefore occur **BEFORE** the Tribulation begins.