

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

February 5, 2020

The Gospel of Luke

Luke 17 – Christ's Second Coming

Topics – Luke 17; The Second Coming; the Rapture

Text – Luke 17:19 – 37 (Open also to Matthew 24)

Introduction

Jesus is travelling toward Jerusalem, heading for the cross. He had just passed near and through Samaria where He healed the Ten Lepers. He is nearing the end of his earthly ministry and is preparing his disciples for what will lie ahead for them. Things would not happen exactly as the disciples had thought. They were waiting for the Kingdom, and they were sure that Jesus would be setting it up. They did not understand this business about a crucifixion.

Here in this passage, the Pharisees start the discussion with Jesus regarding the Kingdom. They demand of him an explanation as to when the Kingdom would start. Jesus answers their question, but they probably would not understand His reply. Nut then, Jesus addresses His disciples regarding the future Kingdom, which would begin at His second coming.

It is important to keep in mind that the second coming of Christ is broken up into two events: the Rapture of the Church and the physical return of Christ to the earth to put away all who rejected Him, and to set us His millennial reign. The disciples did not understand the splitting of His return into two distinct events separated by the seven years of time known as the Tribulation Period, and as Jesus explains it, He does not fully reveal exactly what will unfold. It remained a mystery, even when Jesus taught it. It would not be more fully developed until Paul broke it down in his epistles (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18; 1 Corinthians 15:50 – 58).

Even the writing of Peter was not clear regarding the split within the Second Coming of two events, the Rapture and the actual return, separated by 7. Years (See 2 Peter 3). It seems as if the prophetic teaching looks down through the approximate two thousand years of church history and focuses on it as if it were one event. Why is that? Maybe it is because the Holy Spirit of God intended this teaching by Jesus and Peter to be very relevant to the people going through intense persecution, especially the type of anguish that the Tribulation saints would face.

This teaching regarding Christ's second coming bears a resemblance to what Jesus said in the Olivet discourse, which is recorded in Matthew 24. Though the teachings are very similar and both deal with the same subject, the historical context of the two passages (Matthew 24 and Luke 17) are different.

I. A Word to the Pharisees (vs. 20 – 21)

Before Jesus could discuss the Kingdom of Heaven, which all of the Jews were waiting for, Jesus first teaches them about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven would only be applicable for those who were part of the Kingdom of God anyway.

Jesus emphasizes here the new birth and the indwelling of the Spirit of God that was coming for all who are part of the Kingdom of God. It "is within you," or in the midst of you. The Kingdom of God was not a place, not a time; neither was an earthly kingdom with armies.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17)

It was a spiritual kingdom with a spiritual king. Christ is the king. He is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16).

*"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory:" (Colossians 1:27)*

Israel was waiting for their Messiah who would overthrow the Roman government and rule of the Herods. The common people of Israel were also looking for an end to the corruption within their own religious system, though the religious leadership would certainly take offence to that. Jesus was straightening out their spiritual focus first. The only when to enter this kingdom is through the new birth (John 3:1 – 8).

II. A Wait for His Disciples (vs. 22 – 25)

Here Jesus addresses the disciples and he explains to them that this earthly kingdom that they were waiting for would not come for a while. He seems to indicate that there would be quite a while before that day would come, and it would only come after He had suffered (v. 25). Before Jesus can be the Sovereign King of this earth, He must first be the suffering Messiah.

Notice the Lord tells us that there would come a day when His disciples would desperately be looking for Him, but would not find Him (v. 22). This points to the fact that His churches would also suffer, and they would look for Him to come and put an end to their suffering.

Notice also that there will be many false alarms (v. 23), but when He comes, there will be no mistaking what is happening (v. 24).

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. ... Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:4-5, 26-27)

Disciples of Christ today are waiting for Christ to come back and rapture them. The disciples during the Tribulation will be waiting for Christ to return, to put an end to their suffering at the hands of the Antichrist, and to return to set up the Kingdom.

III. The Warning Signs of His Coming (vs. 26 – 30)

Jesus then explains that the judgment of the second coming will come when some are least expecting it. He illustrates with two judgments from the past: the Flood, and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. In both of those cases, the lost were unprepared and unexpectant of any coming judgment. They were going about their lives. However, in both of those cases the

saved were prepared and forewarned. In both of those cases, also the comparison of the number of saved people to lost people were similar. There were many lost, and very few who were saved. The warning is that the Lord will return when the world is not looking for Him, but we need to be looking for Him.

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:25-28)

See also Matthew 24:1 – 14.

IV. The Witch-hunt for Believers While They Wait (vs. 31 – 33)

Verses 31 – 33 explain what life will be like for believers during the Tribulation Period. They will be on the run (See Matthew 24:15 – 22). Explain briefly the Tribulation Period.

V. The War Against Unbelievers (vs. 34 – 37)

What is described here is not the Rapture, but rather the gathering together of people for the Battle of Armageddon:

"And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God." (Revelation 14:19)

"And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Revelation 16:16)

See also Revelation 19:11 – 21.

Concluding Questions

Do you have the Kingdom of God within you?

Are you observing that the signs of the times are everywhere around you?

Are you ready for the return of Christ?