

Luke 17C

- As we broke our study two weeks ago in Chapter 17, we had just seen Jesus Giving seemingly opposite answers to the Pharisees and His disciples regarding the question when is the kingdom coming?
 - In verse 20 & 21, Jesus had told the Pharisees that the kingdom would arrive so imperceptively that it would be difficult to notice at first
 - Similar to His previous description in chapter 13 of the kingdom as a mustard seed or a small amount of leaven placed in dough
 - The kingdom being very small and almost invisible at first, but over time it's existence and impact will be known to everyone
 - But then in verse 22, Jesus begins to direct his answer to the disciples
 - And when He does, the nature of his answer seems to change
 - Now Jesus began to talk in stark and obvious terms
 - You won't be fooled by the Messiah's return
 - It will be like lightening crossing the sky
- And when we studied these verse last time, we understood that the seemingly different answers were really just different points in time
 - To the Pharisees, Jesus described the way the kingdom would be established in Christ's first coming
 - To the disciples Jesus transitioned to His return at the Second Coming, which will take place in a far different manner than His first
 - And we ended in verse 25, where Jesus explains that this stunning and triumphant arrival must first wait for a far more humble and humiliating event – Jesus' rejection and death
 - And from this point, Jesus continues in today's verses to elaborate on the nature of time and circumstances surrounding His return

[Luke 17:25](#) “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

[Luke 17:26](#) “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

[Luke 17:27](#) they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

[Luke 17:28](#) “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

[Luke 17:29](#) but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

[Luke 17:30](#) “It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

- I reread Verse 25 from our last lesson to help give context to these verses
 - But it’s important to note right from the beginning that there were two principle events referenced in Jesus’ discourse in this chapter
 - The first event Jesus referenced in this chapter was the comment he made to the Pharisees about establishment of the kingdom in their midst
 - This was His reference to the kingdom in it’s earliest stages
 - The time period of the early church as it was first established and nurtured in the decades and centuries following Jesus’ resurrection
 - That was the time period Jesus began talking about, but He quickly left that moment in history and transitioned to discussing a different moment
 - The second event Jesus was talking about was His return, His second coming
 - And this is the period of history in view for the remainder of the chapter
 - In other words, once Jesus makes the transition to the times surrounding His second coming in verse 22, He stays there

- The context of what he says makes clear that he never moves away from a discussion of His second coming or the times surrounding that event
 - So let's see what we can learn about the nature of the times surrounding Jesus return
- First, we hear that the days of the Son of Man will be similar to the days before Noah's flood or the days prior to destruction of Sodom in the days of Lot
 - So what can we learn about the days prior to Jesus' return from these stories?
 - Well the story of Noah begins in Chapter 6 of Genesis
 - Here's what we hear about the nature of days prior to the flood
 - In Chapter 6, the enemy had become especially active in the events of earth, even to the point of angels having sexual relations with women

[Gen. 6:1](#) ¶ Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,
[Gen. 6:2](#) that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.

- Many have seen these verses to refer to demons mating with women
 - In the fact, the Hebrew word for sons of God is used in only here and in Job
 - And in Job, the phrase is used clearly to refer to angelic beings
 - So it seems reasonable to assume that's how it was meant to be interpreted here
- So the point is that the days prior to Noah were marked by extreme levels of demonic activity among men
- Secondly, Genesis tells us that man's own wickedness had reach a peak:

[Gen. 6:5](#) ¶ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[Gen. 6:11](#) ¶ Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.

- Men has always been wicked, since the day Adam left the garden
 - But in the days before the flood, the Bible makes a point that the wickedness on the earth had reach extreme proportions
 - The very fact that the flood was even necessary illustrates how serious the situation had become
 - God's only recourse in light of all that was happening on earth was to wipe out virtually all inhabitants and start again with a family of 8
 - Extreme circumstances call for extreme measures
 - So again, we can expect that the days immediately prior to Christ's return should be marked by extreme depravity
 - We only need to reference the story of Lot in Sodom to find further confirmation of Jesus' point
 - Extreme sinfulness will make the nature of people and society in the days before His return
 - This is important for a number of reasons, but one reason in particular interests me tonight
 - There is teaching within the church that says Jesus' return to earth is predicated on the entire world becoming believers
 - There are multiple reasons why this thinking is flawed and contradictory to scripture, but here's one clear example
 - Rather than a world converted to the faith, Jesus' return is prompted by a world of unbelief and depravity
 - Just glance ahead to Jesus rhetorical question in chapter 18:8, where He asks will He find faith on the earth when He returns?
 - As we will see next week, the answer to that question is no, He won't

- So up to this point, we understand Jesus is teaching that the days prior to His return will be marked by strong demonic activity and extreme human depravity
 - Now we know this is a barometer we can use understand in relative terms how close we are to Jesus' return
 - And when we look toward the end of the Bible and understand the events of Revelation, we see a perfect picture of that kind of time
 - A time when the enemy is actually ruling the earth through one man, the antichrist
 - We see a time when the depravity of men on earth has reached...well...Biblical proportions
 - When persecution on believers reaches it's zenith
 - But I also want you to understand that you don't reach this moment overnight
 - Rather , we should expect to see a steady slide toward that point
 - And if I'm right, then the times we live in now are certainly indicative of the kind of slide you would expect in the years leading up to Christ's return
 - Are we years away, decades away, centuries away?
 - He says people will be oblivious to their circumstances
 - Like in Noah's Days and Lot's days, they will be carrying on in normal ways
 - They will be eating, drinking and giving in marriage
 - Or in Lot's day, they were buying, selling, planting, building
 - In other words, God will not give them any special insight to know that judgment is about to befall them
 - Life will seem normal, unchanged from the way it's been since the beginning of time

- And there will be no warning of the approaching judgment, no sudden heavenly announcement that judgment was coming soon
- In other words no one should be depending on some last minute awareness of judgment to be the thing that converts them
- When it comes, escape will not be possible
- But speaking of escape, there is something else important we learn about those last days from Jesus' comparison to Noah and Lot
 - In both those circumstances, God made a provision for the righteous of the day so that they would not be caught up in the judgment
 - In the case of Noah, the righteous of Noah's family were able to enter the Ark
 - Interestingly, they enter the ark seven days prior to the arrival of the flood waters
 - But once it arrived, they were carried to safety while the rest of the world experienced the judgment of the flood waters
 - In the case of Lot, angels are sent to remove Lot and members of his family immediately before the judgment falls from the sky on Sodom
 - So again, in the days of the Son of Man we should expect that God has a plan to rescue the righteous before His brings judgment on the earth
 - We know from other scripture that this rescue takes two different forms
 - First, there is rescue for the church saint who are still present on the earth before God's period of judgment commences
 - We call this period the rapture, after a Greek word Paul uses in one of his letters.
 - It will be a sudden removal of all believers, body and soul from the earth to meet Christ in the clouds
 - And the earth of unbelievers who are left behind will be subjected to increasingly severe waves of God's wrath and He prepares to pour out judgment on the earth

- But the Book of Revelation also tells us that there are yet more believers produced during this time of tribulation
 - And this second group brings about the second form of rescue that God provides before His final culminating moment of judgment when Christ returns and crushes all who oppose Him
- In verse 31 and beyond, Jesus goes on to describe that second rescue of the righteous using another comparison to the days of Lot

[Luke 17:31](#) “On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.

[Luke 17:32](#) “Remember Lot’s wife.

[Luke 17:33](#) “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it.

- The verses begins with that phrase again with on that day – on the day of the Son of Man –
 - Those who are aware of his arrival must not turn back to retrieve earthly possessions
 - The image here is the same as the one provided by the story of Lot’s wife
 - In the account of Genesis 19, the angels sent to rescue Lot and his family had managed to remove the family from the city
 - But as judgment had begun to fall on the city, Lot’s wife disobeyed the angels’ commands and looked back at the city
 - The implication from the Genesis text is clear – she looked back as if longing to still be a part of that city
 - In light of the enormity of the circumstances, her disobedience became clear evidence of an unrepentant heart
 - She was still attached to the city and all it represented
 - Her rescue was never possible because her heart had never been persuaded to trust in God rather than the world

- Jesus uses a picture of someone who, in the middle of an escape from dire circumstances, stops and returns to retrieve a trivial possession
 - A person in a burning house who leaves only to return to retrieve their coat perhaps
 - Or perhaps a worker in the field who is running away from certain destruction, stops and returns as if to pick up where he left off in his work
 - Both circumstances demonstrate the utter foolishness and absurdity of such behavior by anyone who appreciates their circumstances
- But remember, that the days of these events will be such that the world of unbelievers will not recognize the coming judgment
 - They will be like those who return to the house to get their coat
 - Or return to the field to complete the job
 - In other words, they won't appreciate the finality of the moment
 - They will act as if there is still more time to come, not recognizing that for them time has come to an end
 - So in that sense, their behavior in that moment is a perfect reflection of their heart
- Jesus sums it up this way
 - Whoever seeks to keep his life
 - In the face of impending judgment , the one who acts to preserve his life in this world,
 - Who persists in the patterns of regular life
 - Someone who holds to the values of this world,
 - Who wishes to retain what he's gained in this world
 - That person will forfeit eternal life
 - On the other hand, the one who leaves it all behind

- The one who counts nothing of this world worthy of his interest and adoration
- The one who willingly gives up his life in every form
- The one who has the insight to see the last days for what they are and respond accordingly
 - Like Noah did in giving up 100 years in order to build an ark when there was no rain
 - Like Lot who willingly left his home and all he had merely on the words of strangers who promised destruction to the city
- That person will receive their life in eternity
- Christ's return will be such a moment
 - A moment when the new saints made during the tribulation and who have survived until the end of tribulation will be separated from the rest of the earth's unbelieving population
 - And Jesus goes on to describe to some extent how that moment may look

[Luke 17:34](#) "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.

[Luke 17:35](#) "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left.

[Luke 17:36](#) ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."]

[Luke 17:37](#) And answering they *said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body *is*, there also the vultures will be gathered."

- Jesus begins by saying "on that night"
 - What night
 - Well, if we trace it back in the text, it's the same night as the day mentioned in verse 31
 - Which is the same day as mentioned in verse 30...the day of the Son of Man
 - Which is itself a clear reference to the day of Christ's return

- The day Jesus first described in verse 24
- In other words, what Jesus is about to describe is the day of His Second Coming
 - I mention all this because I want to be clear about what we're looking at here
 - This is not a picture of the rapture
- in Christ's return, would you prefer to be taken away or to remain behind?
 - Well, if we know that Christ is returning and plans to stay on earth ruling for a 1,000 years as scripture tells us
 - Then naturally, we would want to remain on the earth with Him
 - To be removed from the earth at the point where Christ returns is a bad thing
 - So though we want to be the one removed during the rapture, the opposite is true here
 - It's always a matter of wanting to be where Christ is
 - Since at the moment of the rapture Jesus doesn't come to the earth much less stay, you want to be the one caught up in the clouds, and taken away
 - But here, you want to be the one left to rule with Christ
 - I believe it's this distinction that largely explains the various misinterpretations of the events surrounding the end days, especially the rapture
 - There are two moments of rescue described in scripture
 - One involves the removal of the church from the earth prior to tribulation
 - The other revolves around the removal of the unbelievers from the earth at the point of Christ's return
 - Then naturally, we would want to remain on the earth with Him
- To further illustrate this principle, we can look at a parable in Matthew 13

[Matt. 13:24](#) ¶ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

[Matt. 13:25](#) “But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

[Matt. 13:26](#) “But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

[Matt. 13:27](#) “The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’

[Matt. 13:28](#) “And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves *said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’

[Matt. 13:29](#) “But he *said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.

[Matt. 13:30](#) ‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

[Matt. 13:36](#) ¶ Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.”

[Matt. 13:37](#) And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

[Matt. 13:38](#) and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*;

[Matt. 13:39](#) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

[Matt. 13:40](#) “So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.

[Matt. 13:41](#) “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

[Matt. 13:42](#) and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[Matt. 13:43](#) “Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- In the day Christ returns, the earth will be a mixture of believers and unbelievers
 - This confirms that the days of tribulations will produce more believers and those believers will continue to exist to some degree until the very last day of tribulation
 - And then look at what happens to the unbelievers
 - They are the ones gathered up by the angels
 - And they face destruction

- And the ones left behind will shone forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father
 - The believers will remain behind to rule with Christ
- So Jesus says one will be in the bed or at the mill – conducting everyday life in other words
 - And the one will be gone
 - And to further confirm that the ones leaving are the ones who face judgment, look at what the disciples ask next

[Luke 17:37](#) And answering they *said to Him, “Where, Lord?” And He said to them, “Where the body *is*, there also the vultures will be gathered.”

- The disciples as where Lord
 - What do they mean by where?
 - Well consider what Jesus just said
 - He just said two would be in a given place, and one would left
 - The obvious question that comes to everyone’s mind is what happened to the one that was taken
 - Where did he or she go?
 - Which is what the disciples immediately asked Jesus...where , Lord?
 - To which Jesus gave this somewhat veiled answer
 - It’s not really that veiled, at least not to you and I who the Holy Spirit guiding us
 - Jesus says where the body is, there the vulture is also
 - The place this person will be involves death and decay
 - This person is going to a place of death and judgment
 - The person being removed in not in a happy place

- As we come to an end of the chapter and to tonight's teaching, where does Jesus' discourse leave us in Luke's narrative overall?
 - Well, first Jesus is very near the point of His arrival in Jerusalem
 - So, it certainly makes sense that as He nears His departure, He would begin to introduce the topic of His return
 - But more specifically, the Pharisees had opened the question of when will the kingdom arrive
 - So Jesus had simply elaborated on the details of that special day
 - He will return to this topic in even greater detail in Chapter 21
 - In fact, when we study Chapter 21 of Luke, we are actually going to do an extend analysis of Luke's chapter in comparison to Matthew and Mark's treatment of that same topic
 - Because only by studying all three can we get the complete picture of what Jesus is teaching
 - Next week, we will move into Chapter 18, but even as we end tonight, look at what opens the Chapter:

[Luke 18:1](#) ¶ Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

- The Second Coming of Christ will not come in their life times, of course, so Jesus even now begins to prepare them for the need to not lose heart in the waiting for that day
 - Likewise us, consider each day as if it were the last day...