

Luke's previous passages were about living as servants of God, recognizing how unworthy we are of all God's goodness, and being thankful for His gracious mercy on our lives. But next he points out that living as a servant and being grateful will be extremely challenging. We need the very life of Jesus in us to live as a citizen of the kingdom of God (Ephesians 2:19ⁱ), for the world has always been at odds with God's servants.

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." Luke 17:20,21 The kingdom of God is a main theme throughout the Bible. One could say the Garden of Eden was the first example. God's people were in God's place under His rule. The children of Israel under Joshua entered the Promised Land and again you had God's people in God's place under His rule. But just as with the Eden experience, God's people failed to remain under His rule.

The prophets predicted a coming kingdom that would never end under a perfect king. Sometimes they referred to Him as a second David (Hosea 3:5ⁱⁱ). You'll hear more on that next week. He would be the One who would fulfill the promises of crushing the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15ⁱⁱⁱ). He would be like Moses and liberate His people and guide them to the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 18:15^{iv}). He would reign on David's throne forever. He would be called such names as God with us, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6^v).

During the Jews' exile and after the return to the land, a group developed that sought to usher in this coming king by trying to perfectly keep the laws of Moses. They thought if they were righteous enough the king would be sent to them. They were the Pharisees. They watched carefully for signs of the coming of this perfect king, watching the politics and rebel leaders. They wanted to be the first to identify him.

Those Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom would come. It was the same as asking when the perfect king would appear. They didn't realize they were asking the King of kings the question. What they did not understand is that this time the people of the king would not be a specific race, but the people of faith in the King. It would not be a physical location but in the hearts of mankind everywhere. Jesus was performing all the signs the prophets predicted, but the Pharisees missed them because they had the mindset of looking for King David part two. They missed the prophecies of the eternal kingdom's inner dimension of transformed hearts (Romans 12:2^{vi}), and Isaiah's prediction that He would be a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6^{vii}).

Jesus was trying to redirect the focus of the Pharisees to the kingdom in our hearts. He told them it was in their midst. The multiple translations capture it all: in the midst of you, or within you, or within your grasp. It is here now in Jesus and those who place their faith in Him, and it will come in the future as well with Jesus reigning over all the earth. But the here and now is what we need to focus on. Is He reigning in my heart? Is He my King? Is my life an example of His rule?

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. Luke 17:22-24 This is a parallel passage to Matthew 24:23-27. Jesus addressed their idea that the new King would secretly arrive. Instead, He said His coming will be like lightning from the east and visible in the west. John lived to see the first Jewish revolt which took place over this very issue. A false messiah, Menahem, led a rebellion against Rome which ended in the destruction of the temple. Another false messiah, Bar Kokhba, in A.D.135 led rebellion which ended in the Jews being banished from Jerusalem. When Jesus ushers in the kingdom, He won't be some little soldier like David asking followers to trust him. He will be like lightning with millions of His followers riding after Him to witness His instantaneous destruction of all who have come to resist Him (Revelation 19:21^{viii}; Isaiah 11:4^{ix}). He'll be more like a nuclear blast than a leader of guerrilla warfare (Zechariah 14:12^x).

²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Luke 17:25 If it came down to happiness or suffering, would we choose that which would advance God's kingdom regardless of the cost to us? If our loved one was seriously ill, would we pray for whatever would be best for their eternal condition and that of those who know them, or healing because we don't want to lose them?

Jesus chose to suffer and be rejected to save us (Isaiah 53:3^{xi}). He held the Father's heart above His own self-interest. That is only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit in us causing us to love God more than anything or anyone else. He was exemplifying His commands to love God more than family or anything in this world. He was showing us how to bear our cross daily (Luke 14:26,27^{xii}). He is leading us in victory over the world, our old nature, and the devil.

Luke's record of Jesus' words makes it clear that Jesus was not soon to establish a physical kingdom. He was about to suffer and be rejected by that generation. The rejection continues to this day. That had to happen before He comes like lightning to reign - to establish the civil kingdom.

²⁶ Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. Luke 17:26 So when will that be? Jesus gave us a description of that coming day. In Noah's time, the thoughts of men's hearts were only evil continually (Genesis 6:5^{xiii}). There was only one family worth saving (2 Peter 2:5^{xiv},7^{xv}; Hebrews 11:7^{xvi}). That goes right along with 2 Thessalonians 2 that tells us that day will not come until there is a great falling away (*apostasia* – 2 Thessalonians 2:3^{xvii}) and Jesus saying in the next chapter, "...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8^{xviii}

As evil as the world is today, there are still many people of faith and many people coming to know Jesus, especially in China and India. Even the Middle East is seeing a high number of conversions. Perhaps most significant of all, the number of Messianic Jews is surging. Israel in the past has shunned Messianic believers, but now they are gradually being accepted in positions of authority and trust. Nevertheless, the next verse describes what we see advancing as the world prospers.

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. Luke 17:27 When that day comes, people will be going about their normal lives as if corruption and sin were normal and would be allowed to go on forever. People will be enjoying the gifts of God while refusing His love and grace until sudden destruction comes upon them

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-3^{xix}). There will be no warning other than that of Scripture, which they have chosen to call outdated. The anti-Christ will bring promises of peace and prosperity and public confidence will be high. Then... BOOM - Jesus comes! We can see the seeds of the apostasy constantly sown in our education system and in the world of entertainment. These tools of Satan are bombarding each new generation with the theme that sin is normal, live for today, get what you can because when you die it's all over. They also teach that all religions are good, except of course for Christianity because it teaches the lie of objective truth of which of course there is no such thing—that is except for what we tell you.

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— Luke 17:28,29

Another of Jesus' examples of what the end times will be like is the time of Lot. Again, there was just one family in the midst of debauchery. Homosexuality was preferred to normal relations of men and women (Genesis 19:5-9^{xx}). They were enjoying the good gifts of God, indulging their appetites, drinking their wine, making plans to get rich, enjoying commercial enterprises until the moment Lot left Sodom and BOOM - fire and sulfur consumed them all. Jesus is declaring that His return will be completely unexpected. People will be going about their normal routines, indulging in their physical senses, ignoring the pleading of the Holy Spirit, and suddenly they will face the Judge of all mankind.

³⁰ so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Luke 17:30 That is what it will be like. Only a small minority of believers will have survived. Debauchery and self-indulgence will reign. They will think all is well and be making plans for their temporal future when the unexpected return of Christ will end their rebellion in an instant. Of course, suddenly standing before the Judge can happen to any of us in an instant. Our lives are very fragile. Each day is a gift from God. Illness or an accident can suddenly end our time here. We should always live with the realization that any moment might be our last in this life. Our choices should be made in light of eternity that looms before us.

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. Luke 17:31,32 Those who live in that day and happen to be one of the few believers who have survived, when they see Jesus coming are to RUN! They must away from the unbelievers as fast as they can, nor stop to take anything with them. Don't look back or have second thoughts. Lot's wife thought of what she was leaving behind. She disobeyed the angel's command to not look back, and she became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26^{xxi}). Don't have second thoughts about what the world offers.

In Matthew this verse is instruction for what to do when we see the abomination of desolation set up in the temple (Matthew 24:15-18^{xxiii}). That would lead us to believe that it would coincide with the revealing of the Son of Man. Mid-tribers would like that interpretation.

During the Jewish revolt, the Christians of Jerusalem took this verse and Luke 21:20,21^{xxiii} as a warning to flee when it came to pass. They escaped before the Roman

conquest and devastation of Jerusalem by fleeing north through the Arnon Valley toward Pella. As we have seen before, prophecies seem to have intermediate fulfillments.

³³ *Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.* Luke 17:33 This reminds me of the red pill and blue pill in the movie The Matrix. If we accept the reality that Jesus is presenting, there is no turning back. We see selfish living as losing our life, and we see giving up our life as truly living. It sounds crazy, but that is what He did and look what happened. He showed us it was the wise way to live, the only way to preserve your life. How few find life (John 17:3^{xxiv})!

This fallen world presents a mirage to us. It looks like a great oasis. We run to it and drink our fill only to find out in the end it was just sand (Jeremiah 2:13^{xxv}). It is a world of false promises - ones that never deliver. We get little thrills along the way, but they are the thrills of a rollercoaster that ends in a cliff.

The vision we see by faith is following Jesus in giving, loving, and serving which bring the true satisfaction of the life of Jesus flowing through us. It ends in a glorious new beginning that is infinitely more wonderful than anything this world offers. The promises of the kingdom deliver in a greater way than we can now comprehend. This is the contrast Jesus sets before us. Which do you accept as truth? Do you live like you believe it?

What does it look like to lose your life? It looks like Jesus. He gave up everything to gain our eternal souls as His bride, and in the process was given a name above every name (Philippians 2:8,9^{xxvi}). He is the only One who can keep His promises, and His promises are out of this world!

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.* Luke 17:34,35 When the Son of Man comes like a flash of lightning, there will be a separation of those who sought to preserve their lives and those who gave their lives to Jesus. We can look at this verse from two different perspectives. One is that of post-tribulation rapture. The other is that this verse refers to those who came to faith during the tribulation and survived the antichrist's war on the saints. I don't promote one theory of the timing of the rapture over another. They all have their verses. I do know that God will help us through whatever He brings if we put our total trust in Him.

³⁷ *And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."* Luke 17:37 Where did they go? If it is the rapture of the tribulation saints, they flew off to be with their crucified Lord – the corpse, the One who died for us. Verse 25 would then mean the rejection of the Jews will end in the loss of His life. But this dead one will return like lightning and gather His own. Jesus didn't name a location because we meet Him in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:17^{xxvii}).

A different interpretation looks at the word "taken" as used in other passages to meant taken to judgment (Genesis 4:15^{xxviii}). In that case they would have been asking where will this judgment take place? The disciples may have thought this judgment would fall on a specific location. In this interpretation of the question, the answer would then mean where the spiritually dead are judgment will fall – in other words everywhere! Or it could mean the carcass of Babylon the Great (Revelation 18:2^{xxix}), which is also worldwide.

A third interpretation that fits with sayings of the time is that the bodies of those who are judged will be left to the vultures. Jews saw this as a horrible fate (Ezekiel 39:4^{xxx}). Others think the word vultures should be eagles and referred to the Roman standards that stood over the destroyed temple. As with many end-times predictions, there are many interpretations and we can't be absolutely certain of which is correct. I think those living then will surely know.

Jesus' answer to the question of the coming of the kingdom of God shows us that we live in-between the reality of living in the kingdom now, possessing all things in Jesus, and the glory to be revealed when the work in us is finished and our faith becomes sight. We catch glimpses of the kingdom now and have the deposit of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22^{xxxi}), but **then our eyes will behold Him, and kingdom reality will be all there is.** We are kingdom people, living in the King, under His rule even now. Thus, we should *not* focus on the things of this world, its false sense of security, selfish goals, or comfort. Those in the kingdom increasingly realize He is the goal, our focus, our reason for existence. He is our King who has granted us a Kingdom that is infinitely better than what this world offers (Luke 22:29^{xxxii}). We anxiously await His return to finish the work He started in us and take us to the wedding feast of the Lamb (Philippians 1:6^{xxxiii}; Revelation 19:7^{xxxiv}). We live to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord."

The interpretations of the end-time passages are many. I know some people would like me to say I'm sure it's this one or that one. However, I can't say that unless I am sure. I see how so many misunderstood the first coming and wonder how many misconceptions we have about the Second Coming. What I do know is that this passage is teaching us is that the kingdom is here now for those who accept Jesus as King. The return of Jesus will be unexpected and sudden. Everyone will be going about their lives as if all was normal. Judgment will fall on the wicked and there will be no escape. So, we should always be ready. And we are to willingly give our lives to Jesus if we are to find what real life is. Of those themes I am certain. Are you ready for His return?

Questions

- 1 What is the kingdom of God?
- 2 What are some predictions of the coming King?
- 3 What will His coming be like?
- 4 What must happen first?
- 5 What will the world be like?
- 6 What are believers to do when He is revealed?
- 7 What are they not to do?
- 8 How can we save our life?
- 9 What do think "taken" means?
- 10 Summarize what this passage is saying to us?

¹ **Ephesians 2:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

ii **Hosea 3:5 (ESV)**

⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

iii **Genesis 3:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

iv **Deuteronomy 18:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—

v **Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)**

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

vi **Romans 12:2 (ESV)**

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

vii **Isaiah 49:6 (ESV)**

⁶ he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

viii **Revelation 19:21 (ESV)**

²¹ And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

ix **Isaiah 11:4 (ESV)**

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

x **Zechariah 14:12 (ESV)**

¹² And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

xi **Isaiah 53:3 (ESV)**

³ He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

xii **Luke 14:26-27 (ESV)**

²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

xiii **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.

xiv **2 Peter 2:5 (ESV)**

⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

xv **2 Peter 2:7 (ESV)**

⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked

xvi **Hebrews 11:7 (ESV)**

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

xvii **2 Thessalonians 2:3 (ESV)**

³ Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

xviii **Luke 18:8 (NIV)**

⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

^{xix} **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 (ESV)**

¹ Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.

² For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

³ While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

^{xx} **Genesis 19:5-9 (ESV)**

⁵ And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." ⁶ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, ⁷ and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸ Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."

⁹ But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he has become the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door down.

^{xxi} **Genesis 19:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

^{xxii} **Matthew 24:15-18 (ESV)**

¹⁵ "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.

^{xxiii} **Luke 21:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

²¹ Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it,

^{xxiv} **John 17:3 (ESV)**

³ And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

^{xxv} **Jeremiah 2:13 (ESV)**

¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

^{xxvi} **Philippians 2:8-9 (ESV)**

⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

^{xxvii} **1 Thessalonians 4:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

^{xxviii} **Genesis 4:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to him, "Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.

^{xxix} **Revelation 18:2 (ESV)**

² And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

^{xxx} **Ezekiel 39:4 (ESV)**

⁴ You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.

^{xxxi} **2 Corinthians 1:22 (ESV)**

²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

^{xxxii} **Luke 22:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,

^{xxxiii} **Philippians 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

^{xxxiv} **Revelation 19:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;