

How We Wait for Christ's Return, Part 1

Luke 17:22-25

We are returning to the 17th chapter of Luke this morning, an amazing, amazing section on the coming of the kingdom and the coming of the Son of Man. And this is really Luke's introduction to the end times. There is more coming in Luke 21, which is the Olivet Discourse and that parallels Matthew 24 and 25 and then Mark 13, as well.

So, this is really just the beginning of Luke and eschatology or the eschatology that he records from Jesus, but I'm going to start back in Luke 17:20, so follow along as I read, "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he," that is Jesus, "answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' For behold, the kingdom of God' is among you, it 'is in the midst of you. 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. And they will say to you, "Look, there!" or "Look, here!" Do not go out

or follow them. 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. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.'"

In 1970, that's the, the, year that I was born, incidentally, Hal Lindsey published the instant bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. By the end of the decade, it had sold ten million copies. I think, I remember there was a copy, even in my crib, when I was young. But by the 1990s, the book had sold 35 million copies. Which is an astounding number. Which for a nation, at that time, of 280 million people. Statistically speaking, that means that more than one in ten Americans had a copy of Hal Lindsay's, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Staggering.

End of the 70s, ten million copies in circulation, and I guarantee you, it's influence far outweighs its substance. But from a publishing perspective, Lindsay's timing was perfect. Modern State of Israel was barely two decades old. Israel had just won the six-day war against an Arab alliance. The Soviet Union loomed large with the threat of Megadeth, was to establish a ten-nation coalition.

Reading those headlines, men seeing the signs, and it appeared to line up exactly with what the Bible said about Gog

and Magog and the Middle East and a revived Roman Empire; not exactly, but it was close enough to commend Lindsey's approach to sell a lot, a lot, of books, popularize premillennial eschatology, and to cause the world to stop and really pick up a Bible again. And so, a generation of new evangelicals, disciplined in the theology of revivalism, and crusades, and the Jesus movement.

This new generation of evangelicals is weaned on a sensationalistic approach to eschatology; an approach involving headline reading and date setting, which is precisely what Jesus warns us against doing in Luke 17. The book itself was based on outlines from Lindsey's dispensational eschatology courses at Dallas Seminary, but it was presented in a colloquial form, like science fiction writing, kind of mixed with some tabloid style sensationalism. And credit for that really goes to Lindsay's ghost writer, Carol C. Carlson. She's the actual author of the book, though Lindsay's name was on the cover and got the public recognition. He was the smiling face of the entire movement.

What was published in, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, is more of a, really more of a caricature of premillennial eschatology; one that threw off restraints of a more sober minded, and exegetically grounded, and theologically defensible theology of

actual premillennial scholars. Whatever protests may have come out then, from whatever quarter, maybe from more careful and cautious corners of the premillennial seminaries, it's easy to see how any of those protests, at the time, were muted, and subdued, and dismissed. I mean, who could argue with the numbers.

So, for a pragmatically minded, consumer driven public, for people who had been groomed on the Billy Graham style crusades, the Armenian form of revivalism, decisionism, easy believism, the conscious, and unapologetic emphasis on success; counting the numbers of conversions, or, as they say, counting nickels and noses, American evangelicals were uninterested, frankly, in exercising discernment; unconcerned about this sensationalized, headline grabbing eschatology.

Again, this easy reading sensational style of, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, made it a favorite among the new evangelicals coming out of the Jesus movement, through Chuck Smith and the Calvary Chapel movement. And by the way, its first music label, which popularized, cru, contemporary Christian music was, you know what it was called, Maranatha Music. Maranatha is a nod to that whole eschatological thinking, on Maranatha, meaning, our Lord come.

So, through Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel; through John Wimber, that came out of Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel; John Wimber, and the Vineyard movement, and Promise Keepers Conferences. These movements churned out tons and tons of content to feed this new consumer driven evangelicalism. So, books, music, movies, TV shows, all of this content fed a hungry evangelical publishing empire. All of it is fanned into flame by a marketing machine that sold products to the tune of billions of dollars to the evangelical public.

So, this date setting, headline grabbing, headline reading approach had become standard fare for interpreting eschatology and by 1995, when Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins launched the lucrative, Left Behind franchise. The evangelical consumer had been well conditioned to embrace it. Those books have sold more than 80 million copies, spawned movies, and videos, and all that influence has shaped the way Christians read their Bibles.

Some see all this publicity as a good thing. As they say, any publicity is good publicity, right? That's a marketing guy speaking. Even if it's wrong? Is that good? We're Christians, after all, we're people of the book, people of the truth; even if it's in error. Even if the end result is, that it inoculates people against a true reading of Scripture. Is that good?

There's a verse from the prophet Hosea that comes to my mind, "Whoever sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind." And friends, we are reaping it now for sure.

Whenever we take the Bible out of its sacred form and we publish it in a profane form, we trivialize the truth. That happened in Mel Gibson's, *The Passion for the Christ*. It's happening again with this series called, *The Chosen*. And as long as there are consumers, the truth will continue to be profaned in this way. The Bible is not entertainment for the masses. The Bible is the holy Word of God. It is written as a sacred book, part of a sacred Canon. It's meant to be preached. The truth of it is meant to be worshipped. The God of this truth is to be worshipped in the, the, sacred areas of the church. It's not meant to be peddled, and broadcast, and publicized, like cheap entertainment and pulp fiction.

It's written in a manner that's meant to bring conviction in the fear of the Lord. It's not meant just to tell a bunch of stories and leave it at that. It's meant to tell those stories and bring conviction to the conscience that people would fear the Lord and turn to him for their salvation. Well, probably understandable, but we have seen a reaction against all of that

in our day, against all the profaning and the trivializing of God's word.

The look back, historical look back, to look at all this and to examine it critically; to look at the numbers and look at the data, and look at the lifestyles of these authors and they're ghost writers hidden behind them. Look back isn't pretty, at all. I've only provided the very tip of, the tip of, the iceberg. There's just so much more that it really doesn't fit what I really want to talk about.

Evangelical celebrity authors have seemed comfortable with ghostwriting, which is really just another form of plagiarism. Even worse, a serious and credible approach to eschatology has been totally trivialized and profaned and made to look cartoonish and unserious. And for that, I'm warn. Too many today are abandoning, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and leaving Left Behind, behind. And turning to what they perceive to be a more robust and muscular form of eschatology called postmillennialism.

Instead of waiting around for Christ to come and bring in the kingdom, why not stop reading headlines, get off the couch, follow King Jesus in victory, and take the kingdom that he won. That's the message coming out of some quarters, rather loudly.

There are good reasons to reject the Postmillennial position. Some of them are right here in Luke 17.

But it's entirely understandable, when people are disillusioned by that cheap, cartoonish character form of premillennialism that they've seen for decades. Why wouldn't they? When they wise up to it, they feel like they've been sold a bill of goods, and taken to the bank and left hollow. Disappointed. Frankly, some of them angry.

I understand that response. Repeated exposure to a caricature makes many people believe that they do understand premillennial theology already. They don't. But they are suspicious. They react against it, as a knee jerk response. And so, my hope is that by returning to Jesus' actual words, we all can come to a greater clarity of understanding, together, that we can come to a unity and the truth

I do not want to see a new generation of Christians, not as long as I can help it, not as long as they're under this influence of this church. I don't want to see a new generation of Christians like those untaught generations of revivalism and the Jesus movement. I don't want to see a generation of Christians and young people duped, yet again, by an exegetically



weak, hermeneutically inconsistent, and theologically unsound approach to eschatology or any other 'ology' in Scripture.

I want all of us to understand the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I want us to understand the theology of Scripture in all of its glorious and rich detail. I don't want to leave anything out. And there's nothing like eschatology to humble us, because it requires us to look at the details printed on all these different prophecies that seem archaic and, and, hidden and hard to understand. We got to look at the details.

We also have to look at the big picture and hold those two things that seem to be in tension. We need to bring them into harmony together and that is hard, hard work. And anybody that says, Oh it's just the plain sense, plain reading, it's easy. Don't believe that. It's tough. It's tough work.

The Bible shows the kingdom of God to be a literal, visible physical kingdom. It's the restored kingdom of David. It's a physical and temporal reality, that is in a physical place, at an actual time. It's a mediatorial kingdom. It's ruled by David's greater son, Jesus, God's messiah. The Pharisees failed completely to recognize him, as such, which is revealed in their question. Look at verse 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 could be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' Or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.'"

As we said, the Pharisees here, they really, like, are like the unconverted Nicodemus of John 3. They believe they've seen the signs, when they really haven't. They believe they understand the text perfectly, when they really don't. They think that they see who Jesus is, that he is a teacher come from God, when they haven't seen the signs at all. They don't know who this person is, that he is the king.

They have not been born from above, so they are unregenerate and so, they fail to see the king, of the kingdom of God, who is standing right in front of them. If they did see him, as the king of the kingdom, they'd be on their faces worshipping him. They haven't seen the signs of the kingdom, as Christ, graciously, graciously offered that kingdom to his people.

He came preaching the good news of the kingdom. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God validated his message with divine miracles, and these miracles of supernatural power were kingdom power, and that power was a gracious power. Jesus didn't go, off, around snuffing people

out, snuffing out Pharisees, and killing Sadducees with his power. No, he healed. He cast out demons. He healed people of leprosy. He created food out of nothing and gave it to people. He raised a widow's son from the dead. It was gracious. It was kindness itself. It was goodness of God on display in this manifestation of kingdom power.

They didn't accept the kingdom as a people; says there in verse 25, "He will suffer many things be rejected by this generation." Remember in Luke 9:22, he would "be rejected by the elders, chief priests, the scribes." The leadership here: This generation. It's become clear by this time the entire generation has followed its leadership into apostasy; turning away from its Messiah. Kingdom of God is not coming to an apostate nation.

Verse 22, Jesus turns to address his disciples, says there, "He said" to his disciples, "to the disciples, 'The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, you will not see it. And they will say to you, "Look, there!" or "Look, there!" Do not go out or follow them. 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; first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.'"

This section tells us not just, what to think, but it tells us, how to think about Christ's return, and how to wait for his return. The disciples' expectation, verse 22, Jesus said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, you will not see it." Pharisees had asked about the coming of the kingdom of God, and as we noted the last time, three times that expression in verses 20, 21, three times the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God.

As Jesus turns to speak to his disciples, he talks to them about the coming of the Son of Man, the Son of Man, the Son of Man. He says, uses that phrase four times, verse 22,24,26 and 30. The Son of Man, it's a messianic title and it's Jesus' favorite way of referring to himself, as the Son of Man. This is one, here, or four, I guess, I should say, of the 25 uses of the title of the Son of Man, in Luke and every time, Jesus uses it to teach others about himself. In fact, across the four Gospels, the title Son of Man is used 78 times, and in all but two of those instances, Jesus is referring to himself.

The Son of Man refers to Jesus as the federal head of humanity. Federal head of humanity, that is just a fancy way of saying he represents us. He represents a new race of people just

as Adam represented all of humanity, when he fell into sin. Jesus represents all of his people, when he does what is righteous. He is the true son of Adam and in him God raised up the last Adam, his own son Jesus Christ to fulfill what Adam failed to do. Jesus is the ideal man and he is our perfect representative head.

Daniel writes in Daniel 7, starting back in verse 9. He's, Daniel, se, says, "As I looked, thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took his seat;" that's God the father, the Ancient of Days, "his clothing was white as snow, the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames;" "Burning fire. A stream of fire came out from before him."

Just pausing there for a second. That description, by the way, that's of the Ancient of Days: God the father. We find that same description about Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter 1, "Thousands of thousands served him," this Ancient of Days, "10,000 times 10,000 stood before him; the court sat in judgment and the books were opened." Judgment scene; Great courtroom.

And then verse 13 says this, Daniel says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one coming out of the clouds of heaven," by the way, "like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented

before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed."

That is the same Son of Man, by the way, who speaks in Psalm 2 verse 7, "I will tell of the decree:" says the Son of Man. "The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the Earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a Potters vessel.'" "

You see that happening in the first coming of Christ? No. That's reserved and waits for his future coming. In Psalm 110, verses 1 and 2, David says this. He writes, "The Lord says to my Lord:" that is, *Yahweh* says to my *Adonai*, "'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.' The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies!" Do we see Jesus do that, during his first time on Earth? Where his enemies his footstool, so to speak? No, that too waits for the second coming.

Son of Man is the Messiah. He's the one who will come in power when he comes again. He's the one who will bring the

kingdom of God with him. He will break and dash to pieces any who refuse to bow the knee. That's the Son of Man. The Son of Man is the invisible Son of God made visible, in the incarnation. He came the first time preaching the kingdom of God, calling for repentance. He died for the salvation of his citizens. Citizens of the kingdom of God.

According to first Corinthians 15:24 to 28, it says, "He will deliver the kingdom to the father", in verse 24. In fact, you can turn, you're in Daniel 7, turn to the other end of your Bible and go to 1 Corinthians 15:24. Catch up with me there. I'm going to keep talking. "He'll deliver the kingdom to the Father," verse 24, "after destroying every rule and every authority and power." What's Paul talking about there? He's alluding back to Psalm 2, back to Psalm 110. "He will deliver the kingdom to the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and every power."

And verse 25 says, "He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." All mankind will have 1000 years to see what God's righteousness looks like, when it is enforced here upon the earth, in a visible kingdom. According to Revelation 20, verses 1 to 8, Satan and demons are, are, going to be bound during this time, cast into the abyss, unable to roam the Earth,

as they do now. And during this time men will still sin. We don't have the excuse anymore: The devil made me do it.

During this time, Christ will rule and reign. He will break and dash into pieces anybody who rebels against his authority. During this time, Christ will vindicate God's righteousness, because all the promises of God, to judge the nations, to restore Israel, all will be fulfilled in Christ by his rule, by his power, by his authority, and in his reign, to vindicate the faithfulness and the truth of God.

After the thousand years of Christ reign on Earth, God will release Satan and his demons. They will deceive unbelieving peoples and nations and gather them for battle against Christ and instantaneously fire will come down from heaven to consume them all. After this comes the Great White Throne judgment, when God calls the unbelieving angels and humans before him and Christ passes judgment. All the unbelieving, are cast into the lake that burns with fire.

As it says in 1 Corinthians 15:26 and 27, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." Death, is a tool that he uses to judge, but once he's through with that tool, he throws it away. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet." Including Satan, including



demons, including unbelieving men and women, and death itself. Then verse 28, "When all things are subjected to Christ, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him." That is to the father, to the one who put all things in subjection under Christ. Why? In order that God may be, All in all.

The triune God will reign supreme in eternity future. Son of man, federal head of humanity, he's the one who represents man to God and God to man, as the perfect mediator. He is the one who, to whom the ancient of days has conferred dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, so that all the nations of the world will serve him. God's put all things under the feet of the Son of Man, and that will be manifest visibly, for all on Earth in a millennial kingdom.

Now back to Luke 17:22, keeping all that in mind, according to that verse, no wonder the disciples will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man. Who does not long for that. Fact desire, the ESV translation, rather tame word. I think it's too, too restrained for the sense here. The verb is, *epithumia*, it means, strong desire, earnestly desire, to long for. In a negative sense, it's actually used of passionate lust. So, in a positive sense, it's to earnestly desire, to greatly long for.

The coming of the millennial kingdom of Christ is on hold. This is all according to the sovereign plan of God, by the way. "The mystery of the church, hidden for ages and generations", Colossians 1:26, "but now revealed to his Saints." So, in this church age, the disciples of Jesus, they need to set their expectations accordingly. It's gonna be awhile. What are our expectations? Rather than experiencing the times of the Messiah, the days of the Son of Man, where he reigns visibly from Jerusalem, disciples need to prepare themselves, for enduring a season of waiting, to wait in hope, to wait righteously, but waiting. This is our righteous expectation that, we are waiting for the Lord's return and waiting is what characterizes Christians.

The Bible refers to this in Titus chapter 2, verse 11 and following, refers to this as the blessed hope. The blessed hope. This blessed hope that we have, this waiting that we endure righteously. It trains us to wait patiently, to wait obediently, to wait in a pursuit of holiness, always to be about the work of the great commission, at all times.

From Titus 2:11 and following says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people and training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-

controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." You want, young men, you want to know what true manhood looks like, right there; Renouncing ungodliness, renouncing worldly passions, living self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age. That's manhood. That's what it takes to be a good husband. That's what it takes to be a good father.

That's what it takes to be a good church member. That right there, verse 12, Titus 2. And why would we do that? Why would we do that? Why would we live that way? Because we are, verse 13, "waiting for our blessed hope, waiting for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."