

# God's Kingdom Come

*Gospel According to Luke*

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**Bible Text:** Luke 17:20-25

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Let's take our Bibles and look together in Luke 17. In the bulletin, I had put down that you would be looking at verse 20 all the way down to verse 37. You know what that expression is when you bit off more than you chew, such is the case. You know the bulletin is just a direction, it's not our master and so as the LORD has directed, I am going to be preaching verse 20 down to verse 25. Now, it's all important. The text in its context, especially when it speaks there, "as in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man," LORD willing, we'll look at that next time. But let's just read for today from Luke 17:20 down to 25 and I want to speak with you about "God's Kingdom Come." The question is: is it here? Is it something we still await? What is God's kingdom?

And that was the question of the Pharisees here in verse 20,

20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come,

This is something that's on many people's minds today, in fact, whole seminars and conferences are built around this question. People love to speculate and prophetic conferences are popular. But what's the answer? Well, it is given right here,

he [the LORD Jesus] answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!

And here's the word, "behold," which is to catch our attention, for,

behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

And in the original, that can mean "within you," speaking of within those that are subjects of the kingdom, but it also can be translated "among you," but either way, the kingdom of God is within you.

22 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. 23 And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24 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. 25 But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

So what do we learn about the kingdom of God? The first thing that I would underscore is that the kingdom of God is the central theme, if you will, of our LORD Jesus Christ in his preaching when he came to this earth. I know that there are many that think of the kingdom of God as being yet future; they think in terms of some physical earthly kingdom to come and how everything is going that way. But if we take Christ at his word, and I don't know why we wouldn't, then suddenly we see that, "Wait a minute, he's not talking about a kingdom yet to come but he's talking about a kingdom that is come." And the reason I say that is if you go back to Matthew 3, these are just some examples, and you can do this, just take your concordance and look up the word "kingdom" or "kingdom of God," you can do it with a Strong's Concordance and just run all the way through the New Testament, it's eye opening how many times that word is used, not to describe something that is yet to come, but that is come.

And here in Matthew 3, this is the beginning of our LORD's ministry as he went about preaching. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea," so this verse has to do with what John was preaching. You remember, John was the forerunner, the Spirit of Christ being in him, and what did he say? "Repent ye." In other words, have a change of heart and mind toward God. That's what repentance is, even toward his Son, the LORD Jesus Christ. Notice, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Now, when the Scriptures use that term, "is at hand," it's not saying soon to come, it means it's here. It's at hand.

So what was the problem with the Pharisees? They didn't have repentance in spite of the preaching because we know when they questioned our LORD and he asked them why they weren't baptized with the baptism of John, they wouldn't answer. In essence what he was saying is, "You're rebels." In fact, John told them that. Rather than bow to the clear revelation of this word concerning the LORD Jesus Christ which is the fruit of the Spirit, it's repentance to bow, have a change of attitude, heart and mind, they continued to persist. How many times have you been explaining something to somebody and you just have to stop and say, "You're not listening. You're not listening to what I'm saying because if you were, you wouldn't still be arguing except for you don't agree."

So repentance, it's not an invitation, it's a command and, dear friends, when we come to this word, it is with that heart attitude that we need to come, "LORD, whatever in my mind and heart still remains in contrast, rebellion to who you are and what is clearly revealed here, bring me to bow." We never should presume that in every area we have bowed. We're rebels by nature and it takes the Spirit of God to teach us.

So this was John, the forerunner, and you could see he quotes Isaiah. When he says, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he says, "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias." Now wait a minute, he just spoke of a kingdom and yet he says, "this is he which was spoken of by the prophet Esaias." We just sang it, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded." A lot of people are talking about what to believe and I don't even want to go there with any message on the kingdom of God. When Christ said, "The kingdom of God is within you or among you," the reason he said that is because where there is a kingdom, there is a king. In fact, in the original, that word, the noun, the verb form of that same noun, "kingdom," means "a ruler." A ruler, the chief, the sovereign, by whom God has ordained all things. And he says, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD." So this one who was to come that John the Baptist was declaring was none other than the LORD, God in the flesh, "make his paths straight." That means hear him, just like Moses said that the LORD would raise up a prophet like unto him, hear him.

Now, in Matthew 4, this is where we see our LORD, this public manifestation unto Israel, and those of his day and in the bulletin you'll see an article that's written there of what our LORD meant when he said to John the Baptist to baptize him because "it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," it's not that there was righteousness in the water. He wasn't saying that but when our LORD here publicly manifested himself to Israel, he would have been 30 years of age and that was the age in which the priests entered into the priesthood. And you remember when they sanctified themselves, it was through the water; it was through the laver of water. So this baptism of our LORD wasn't because he needed to repent of sin, that wasn't it, but he was entering into the public ministry as the high priest of his people, the sanctifying, the setting apart now that come.

And the baptism which, again, you have to realize that the King James translators believed in sprinkling as a mode of baptism and so that's why they left it "baptize." It's the Greek word "baptizo" and they just chose to transliterate it, but if you go back in the original and look at the word, it means "immerse." And really that's the only way that makes sense in what it typifies. When the LORD said, "so it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," just as the baptism, the water, the sanctifying of the priest was typical of his work that he came to accomplish, so the baptism, the immersion.

I was preaching on this yesterday with the brethren in Malawi and I brought out if it was just a matter of sprinkling, they sure went to a lot of trouble to go down into the water, get wet, just to sprinkle and come back out. But that's not what we're reading here. The baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of the LORD Jesus Christ. If someone dies, you don't just take a little bit of dirt and sprinkle it on them and then walk away and say, "Okay, they're buried." There is a death, there is a burial, there is a resurrection.

And I believe that's what our LORD was declaring here when he said, "For thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." In other words, it declared their righteousness that he came to fulfill and if you tie that with what our LORD is saying to these

Pharisees, they were looking for an earthly kingdom; they were looking for a Jewish Messiah; they were following him, waiting. It's kind of like politics today. What's the new thing? You turn on the tv, you know, and see what's the latest thing. They were waiting to wake up to hear that, "Ah, he has overthrown the Roman government and now comes the Jewish kingdom." That's what they were all waiting for.

And our LORD clearly said, "This kingdom doesn't come with observation." So if you're of those still looking for some earthly kingdom, still looking to old Jerusalem, somehow that after Christ has fulfilled it all you think that somehow there is going to be a temple rebuilt over there and sacrifices restored again, what blasphemy. You stand in need of repentance just like anyone of these because that's not what God has purposed. Why would Christ fulfill it and then we go back to the old way? But he says here, just like here in his baptism, he's announcing that righteousness that he was to fulfill in his death, burial and resurrection. And even here in our text, Luke 17, "But first," verse 25, he says, "must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." He's speaking of his death.

So this kingdom of which Christ speaks here was to be founded upon that chief cornerstone, that foundation laid in his death, burial and resurrection and that's what he's announcing here in Matthew 4 when he from his baptism was taken into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. In other words, he was God's true Israel. Just like he's the last Adam, there is a first Adam that failed, the last Adam as representative obeyed, so Israel. Israel in every way failed in everything pertaining to the justice and holiness of God but now this one, God's Israel, because the word "Israel" means "prince with God," he had to come and literally fulfill in obedience everything where Israel failed and that's how he's our substitute.

But I say that because down in verse 17, after he had been tempted in the wilderness those 40 days, representative of the 40 years that Israel wandered in the desert, verse 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say," what? "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He's not going to say something different than what he in his Spirit put in John the Baptist to say. This whole Scripture is united, that here again, it requires a repentance from every false way, from every false notion, to look to any other thing that is yet to be fulfilled and to see that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

I know there are some that try to make a difference between the kingdom of heaven and kingdom of God. It's the same thing. God is in heaven. "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." Have you ever stopped and think when the LORD taught his disciples to pray he was talking about what Christ came to accomplish, "thy kingdom come. Thy will be done." The will is the testament. There wasn't one thing left undone that Christ didn't accomplish and so we rest in him.

Look down in verse 23. This is why I was saying that when you really begin to run this through the Scriptures, all of a sudden the lights come on because you realize he wasn't talking about some earthly kingdom in the sweet by-and-by, he was talking about here

and now. Verse 23, "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom." So that tells you right there we can't preach the Gospel unless we preach the Gospel of the kingdom, of Christ ruling and reigning now.

Now here's where you get all kinds of men's interpretations because they'll say, "Well, the first time he came, it was to be the Savior and now we're waiting for him to come back again to be the LORD." You have just dissected the word in a way that is contrary to everything that's written here. This is called the Gospel of the kingdom. It wouldn't be good news were it not that he reigns. That's the good news of the Gospel, that everything he set out to do, he came to do and fulfill it.

Now, the healing, and it says, "and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people," those healings were a demonstration that he was indeed who he said he was because the Old Testament said when the Messiah would come, this is how you would know him. Remember, even when John the Baptist from prison sent a delegation to ask our LORD, "Are you he or not?" he's about ready to die and he's, it's like we sing, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." I've cast it all on him, now I'm facing the tribulation and trouble, "Are you the one?" What did the LORD say? He sent them back and showed them Isaiah and said, "What do the Scriptures say?" We need not doubt. We doubt ourselves but we don't doubt him.

I'll tell you, as the LORD began to show me this, it just brought me low and I can never get enough of this. This message here, if you want to know the heart and soul of how the LORD taught me and brought me low, because I was raised in a system that was just the opposite. There were seven dispensations and God did one thing and man disobeyed and so now he started again, the second one. We had a God start and stop, start and stop, start and stop. And I can remember studying this and thinking, "Well, what's to say then that it's not going to stop and start again? Does God all of a sudden change and now finally everything is going to be the way it's supposed to be?" That's not the God of Scripture. No, God has ever always only had one purpose and will, that's to glorify his Son. As we saw in the first hour, even in the fall. It was necessary that the first Adam failed, that the second Adam be exalted. So that's what we see here.

If you look in Matthew 5, how many people quote these Scriptures, the Beatitudes but it says what? "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Notice the language. It doesn't say, "for theirs shall be the kingdom of heaven." Does your Bible say that? Mine says "is." How could it be present if it weren't present? "Blessed are the poor in spirit." The poor in spirit are the ones that the LORD brings low, shows them that they have not.

This entering into his kingdom is not going to be by any works of our own. We have nothing. It's like that hymn that's in our hymnbook there, deplorable but, "Must I go in empty-handed," is the question and the answer is, "You'd better not," in the book. But the Scripture says, "You'd better come empty-handed. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Christ I cling," the Christ of the cross.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." That's the repentance. To repent is to see ourselves as nothing, less than nothing, be brought low because in this kingdom there is only one that matters and that's the Savior. I thought about putting that out on our sign, "Welcome to Shreveport Grace Church where everybody is nobody and Christ is all." Flash that our there. So that really is what this is about. We're here for one purpose, when we gather, it's to honor the LORD Jesus Christ and anything else is false worship. Anything else.

Look at verse 10, the same thing, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." So when you read the Scriptures and you begin to see repentance is tied to who he is as King, that humiliation of the sinner as being made poor and needy, is tied to him being the King but also the persecution, the opposition. I'm going to guarantee you when this speaks there for righteousness' sake, it's not talking about any personal justice or righteousness that we might have. But I don't know too many people that are persecuted for being kind to their neighbor or doing what men call good works. That's not what this is. It says, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." He's talking about that righteousness that he came to earn and to establish on behalf of poor and needy sinners, laying, lying halt, unable to do anything of themselves and by his work, as we saw in the first hour, to be translated, delivered, taken from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son by his work at the cross.

That's what our LORD is speaking of here and notice, again, it doesn't say for theirs shall be the kingdom of heaven, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is that cross that those that are the LORD's when he draws them to Christ by his Spirit, so if we're one of those, this is that cross that we bear. It's not that we have to do anything to complete the work of Christ at the cross, no, but there is a cross to bear in identifying with his cross.

You want to get people upset at you, tell them that their righteousness and their works and their deeds are nothing before a holy God. Have you ever had that kind of discussion with somebody and watch their brow get tight? It's like one lady told me one time, she said, "Well, it just sounds like you're making robots out of everybody because you're saying God does the saving," and the LORD made me to tell her, "Being a robot, that's a little bit sophisticated. The word that the Scripture uses is dung." That's all that our supposed righteousness is before God is dung.

People get upset. They start thinking, "Well, you mean I've been serving the LORD all these years for nothing?" Yup, if that's what your thought is that somehow that that means anything. That's the righteousness because in this kingdom, think about what a kingdom is, the king gets all the glory. It's not the subjects. Even when the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, she had heard about his glory, and the thing that impressed her was how all of the servants served him. That's a picture of the LORD Jesus Christ. Who is given the glory? It's Christ. That's his kingdom work, it's Christ.

I told you before about that painting that one of the kings in France had commissioned an artist to paint and he went out and sat in his garden on his bench and the artist was just painting away. When he got done, the king thought, "Okay, we'll hang that in the palace

hallway." And when all the people came and the dignitaries came and they stopped and looked at the painting, they were admiring the garden, the flowers, the trees he had painted so pretty in the painting that no one was even paying attention to the king. So he called the artist back and said, "Redo this painting to where the flowers are not predominate, the king is what I want people to see." The king. Well, if that's true in earthly matters, how much more so in things pertaining to the kingdom of God? There is only one who gets the glory.

Even Christ said that, he said, "The Father judges no man but has given all judgment in the hand of the Son," and for that people got upset at him. And I dare say that's where people are in religion today that call themselves Christian. They are not interested in a king who gets all the glory, they're interested in one where they share the glory but there's no glory to be shared in this kingdom.

So you can see that the kingdom of God is central to the proclamation of the LORD Jesus Christ and the message but, secondly, coming back to my text here in Luke 17, the kingdom of God is both spiritual and actual. A lot of times when you say spiritual, people think, "Okay, so now we're into allegory." No, spiritual, there is a real spiritual kingdom but it's not perceived with physical eyes. That's why the LORD says here in verse 20, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." I don't know how you're going to turn that around and say, "Well, for now it doesn't come with observation." He just plainly said, "It cometh not with observation."

And look what he said to his disciples, "Beware because the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man." He's talking about after his ascension. "And ye shall not see it." Because he's saying there's going to be a period of persecution. John experienced it. He lay his head on our Savior's breast and yet in the book of Revelation, we find him in the isle of Patmos, exiled for the kingdom's sake, and the whole book of Revelation, when you read from verse 1 of chapter 1, it says the revelation of Jesus Christ. This was written for the comfort of his children of the kingdom that would be perhaps questioning like John the Baptist, "Are you He or aren't you?" He's gone. You desire to see one of the days of the Son of man. I'm sure in their minds they're thinking back to when they had him, they walked with him on this earth and he was there everyday and now gone. But what did he tell his disciples? "I don't leave you orphans. I'll come to you."

How does he come? By his Spirit. I would not be preaching this to you right now were it not for his Spirit. I'd be still following along right in the Pharisees' doctrine of the kingdom because I believed that for years. All that is is a continuance. You hear people preaching about some future earthly kingdom and going back to Jerusalem, that's just the Pharisaical doctrines still flowing today. That's all it is. What on earth? You read it, Robert, in 1 Corinthians 15: first the natural then the spiritual. That doesn't say go back to the natural. Why on earth would I ever want to go worship again in some earthly place called Jerusalem in some earthly temple where sacrifice is being offered again? What? People that reason that way still have not seen the kingdom of God.

That sounds pretty blunt but there are people that that's their idol and they hold to it and if they do, they still have not seen the kingdom of God. In fact, that's why I said this is spiritual but it's actual when in John 3 when Nicodemus, here was one to whom the LORD would grant repentance but at this point, it was the beginnings of that work in the LORD drawing him. He would not have come to Christ had not Christ by his Spirit drawn him.

But now it was necessary that Christ work that repentance in him and it's not necessarily immediately. When I think about even how the LORD taught me and it began with seeing thoughts from this Word and questioning how it is that I had been taught and what it is I was professing and how it was I was believing and my mind was spinning around the what, when and where until it pleased God to reveal Christ in me and all of a sudden it became about the who, and that's when all the rest went away. I will tell you, to perceive the kingdom of God is to perceive the King. That's where it all stands or falls.

And here you can see Nicodemus' profession in coming. He said some good things in verse 2, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." You're thinking, "It sounds pretty good." What did our LORD say? Verse 3, "and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again," born from above, "he cannot see the kingdom of God." I read a tract a number of years ago, "What you need to do to be born again," and I remember thinking, "Well, if you could do those things, you wouldn't need to be born again." Here it says, "Except a man be born again," in the original that means born from above. Every good gift cometh from above.

"He cannot see the kingdom of God." He cannot perceive what this kingdom is about. It's a spiritual kingdom and yet it's an actual kingdom. We're either part of that kingdom now or we're not. He either paid our sin debt or he didn't. That foundation, there is no foundation that can be laid than that which is laid, but it's not laid in the physical observances of anything, it's in the work and the person of the LORD Jesus Christ alone. Period. And that's what he came to establish. Either he did it or he didn't.

That's why I say that this is not a kingdom that is earthly and visible or political that somehow we're still waiting for this to occur. No, it's spiritual but it's real. The reason I say that is there you can read some commentators, when they say, yes, it's spiritual but what they mean is you can't really look for anything other than in your day-to-day life, whenever you're in trouble and suddenly now you get some help from the word going through your trouble and now you're delivered, they call that an existential thinking that that's what the kingdom is. It's whatever it is to you.

Again, man will always try and take and personalize something where it belongs to Christ alone, his glory. When Christ, coming back here to Luke 17, said to them, "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there!" I mean, what could be plainer? He didn't say, "lo here or lo there now," but "behold the kingdom of God is within you." As I said, that could be understood in two ways: it's either among you because where the king is, there is his



kingdom. And that's the thing we need to acknowledge, that our Christ came to this earth to suffer and to die. He himself said that in verse 25, "first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation." That's a key word there. That was his one purpose in coming.

Don't think for a moment that he was a failure. You see, I was raised under that type of teaching, that he came and he legitimately offered himself to the Jewish nation to be their king but they refused and so now we're in Plan B, that he opened it up to the church and therefore had to die as if the death or the cross of Christ wasn't part of the plan all along. Well, if it wasn't, certainly they didn't inform our LORD because he said here, "first must he suffer many things." It was never a surprise what men would do unto him. In fact, as we read in the book of Acts 4:28, "For to do unto him whatsoever thy hand hath before determined should be done." They didn't do one thing to our LORD but what was already determined. Why? Because this kingdom would be established by his death and his burial and his resurrection and if you're looking for another kingdom or a way into the kingdom, then you're still blind, in darkness and in need of repentance.

So we can understand then verse 21, the kingdom is within you, among you, but it is within you. Just as we just read in John 3, I read you verse 3 but verse 8, our LORD repeated because Nicodemus is scratching his head and he's thinking, again, how can a man enter again into the womb and be born? Again, until the Spirit of God reveals Christ in you, you're always going to have natural minded reasoning and thinking with regard to things of God. That's why you hear people talking today still about streets of gold. I heard a businessman the other day getting all religious on me and it's just like it makes you want to vomit because he's saying, "You know, life is tough but, oh, I'll tell you what, I'm looking forward to my house up there in heaven. Can you imagine having streets of gold paved in front of your house?" All I could do is look at him and say, "Do you really think that that's what that means?" "Yeah, what else would it mean?" There is somebody that's reasoning naturally in terms of things pertaining to God and has never had his eyes opened, otherwise he'd be talking about one thing, the LORD Jesus Christ. Read the book of Revelation, everything that gives us a glimpse of heaven has to do with that one seated upon the throne. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. I read a book one time that said that people in works religion wouldn't be happy in heaven anyway because it's not about them and that's why in congregations, they're all about getting pumped up by the preacher but that's not the kingdom of heaven. There is only one that gets the glory in the kingdom of heaven and that's Christ. That's Christ.

So here in John 3 the LORD said in verse 7 to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." He's not telling him what to do, he's making a declaration that the only way Nicodemus, that you're ever going to see this kingdom and enter it is being born again. Now, I believe the LORD knew Nicodemus was one of his and he knew he had come to pay his sin debt. That's why we never give up on anybody just because they're in blindness. They may still yet be one that the LORD for whom he paid the debt and still hasn't drawn and will if he paid their debt. But he says to him, verse 8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell

whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." How can I claim to be a child of the kingdom today? It's by the Spirit of God. That's it, because I certainly wasn't on this path to begin with.

Now, this is where I have to draw a line this week because when we read here in Luke 17 and here's the thing about this kingdom that Christ came to establish and this is what I want to come back to next time: when it says there in verse 24, "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven." Have you ever been walking or driving and all of a sudden there's that lightning flash and you're like, "Whoa, where did that come from?" You weren't standing there waiting for it. The flash came and went.

"So shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation." Now, here's your homework: I want you to go and read verse 26 to 37 which is where I had intended to try to cover today, and I want to ask you this question: when is this fulfilled? Most people when they read this are still thinking it's yet to come; that as in the days of Noah. How many times have we heard people say that, "Well, as the days of Noah, so shall be the Son of man." They're thinking at the end of time. I would ask you and if you have cross references, read some of the other Gospels and Matthew 24 is another one that's a good one to read, but do your homework before we come back this next time. I will tell you that what Christ is describing is not what would take place at the end of time, but will take place in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 because this kingdom allows for no other earthly kingdom and for it to be established, there had to be a putting away of the old completely.

Left up to men, they never would have put it away. In fact, after Christ died and the veil was rent in twain from top to bottom, what did they do? Went right back and sewed it back up again and continued to offer those offerings. Now, you want to see just how distasteful and such a disdain that that is to Christ and to God, not only do we have the testimony of Scripture of what would happen where in AD 70 the LORD raised up the Roman army and came in and destroyed that temple and that city, but read Josephus if you like to read. Josephus was not, he did not profess to be a Christian, he was an historian who lived back in that day and he recorded the destruction of Jerusalem and I will tell you everything he stated goes right along with what we're reading here. The reason I state that is because when the LORD purposed just like in the days of Noah, to destroy the earth and the only ones saved were those that were in the ark, so it is in this kingdom. There are not two rival kingdoms, there's one and this one that the LORD Jesus Christ came and earned and established by his shed blood, the satisfaction of his Father, that is the kingdom to which he calls everyone for whom he paid the debt. We'll take a look at that next time.