

## Marking Time or Making Time Count?

### a. The Coming of the Kingdom (17:20-37)

**17:20a** In the previous section we learned of the servant's priorities -- duty and contented thankfulness. How does the Pharisees' question perhaps betray other priorities? (11:29-32)

[1] [17:20,21] Their question rested on a purely external view of this divine kingdom; His advent appeared to their mind as a great and sudden dramatic act. In the gospel point of view, this expectation is certainly not altogether false; but humanity must be prepared for the new external and divine state of things by a spiritual work wrought in the depths of the heart; and it is this internal advent which Jesus thinks good to put first in relief before such interlocutors. The side of the truth which He thinks proper to set forth is, as usual, that which is mistaken by the parties addressing Him. To the Pharisee Nicodemus, who came to Him with a question analogous to that which His *confreres* are now putting, Jesus replies exactly in the same way. **F. Godet** *Luke* p.403

**17:20b,21** What are the possible meanings here?

[2] [17:21] "among you, in your midst" ... seems to suit the context better; for the Kingdom of God was not in the hearts of the Pharisees, who are the persons addressed. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.406

[3] [17:20,21] It is in *the midst of you* (*entos humon*), an expression for which a number of meanings have been suggested. a. The kingdom is essentially inward. But this would be unparalleled in the Gospels (though cf. Rom. 14:17). b. The words prophesy the way the kingdom will come: 'The kingdom will suddenly appear among you.' This is possible, but the words in that case bear a somewhat unnatural sense. c. The kingdom is 'within your reach', i.e. it is attainable if you go the right way about it. But Jesus usually regards the kingdom as God's gift, not man's attainment. d. The kingdom is 'among you', i.e. it is present in the Person and ministry of Jesus. This seems the way the words should be taken. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.259

**17:22-24** What do these words discourage? (Acts 1:6-8)

[4] To the Pharisees Jesus declared what they did not know, the spiritual essence of the kingdom. But Jesus did not mean to deny the external and final appearing of a divine state of things. To develop this other side of the truth, He turns to His disciples,

because it is only to those who possess something of His spiritual life that He can speak profitably of His future return. Thus it is that the treatment of the same subject is modified, according to the character of those whom Jesus addresses. Besides, the abstract idea of the coming of the kingdom is now presented as the reappearing of Jesus Himself. **F. Godet** *Luke* p.403

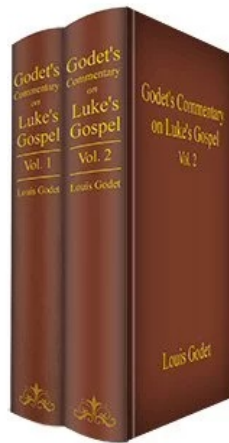
[5] When the apostles or their successors shall have passed a long time on the earth ... when they shall be at the end of their preaching and their apologetic demonstrations, and when around them scepticism, materialism, pantheism, and deism shall more and more gain the ascendancy, then there shall be formed in their souls an ardent longing for that Lord who keeps silence and remains hid; they will call for some divine manifestation, a *single one* [*mian*] like that of the old days, to refresh their hearts and sustain the fainting Church. But to the end, the task will be to walk by faith (*ouk opsesthe*, ye shall not see). Need we be astonished if in such circumstances the faith of the great majority verges to extinction (18:8)? **F. Godet** *Luke* p.404

[6] [17:23,24] All predictions of exact dates, and all statements as to local appearances, are to be mistrusted ... "Do not leave your ordinary occupation, still less go after those who offer to lead you to the place of the Son of Man's appearing." ... As sudden and as universally visible. None will foresee it, and all will see it at once; so that no report respecting it can have any value. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.407

[7] [17:23,24] People will think they see the coming of the Son of man and will call on the disciples to see it their way too. The implication is that the kingdom is present in some secret, unexpected way. Jesus flatly rejects this. Such peering into corners will not be necessary, for when the Son of man comes His coming will be as obvious as the lightning. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.260

**17:25-27** What will characterize the 'days' of men, in contrast to the 'days of the Son of Man'?

[8] [17:25] A separation is about to supervene between Israel and its now present Messiah. And this rejection of the Messiah by His own people will be the signal for the invisibility of His kingdom. Comp. the antithesis 13:35 (the faith of Israel bringing back the Messiah from heaven). How long will this abnormal state last? Jesus Himself knows not. But He declares that this epoch of His invisibility will terminate in an entirely materialistic state of things, vers. 26-30, which will be brought to an end suddenly by His



## Keeping the 2 comings in balance - the 'whole truth'

[9] To see these two comings of Christ distinctly is of great importance to a right understanding of Scripture. The disciples, and all the Jews of our Lord's time, appear to have seen only one personal advent. They expected a Messiah who would come to reign, but not one who would come to suffer. The majority of Christians, in like manner, appear to see only one personal advent. They believe that Christ came the first time to suffer. But they seem unable to understand that Christ is coming a second time to reign. Both parties have got hold of the truth, but neither, unhappily, has embraced the whole truth. Both are more or less in error, and the Christian's error is only second in importance to that of the Jew. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol.2 p. 240

advent. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.405

[10] [17:26,27] Noah's contemporaries were sinful men, but it is not this that Jesus stresses. There is nothing sinful about the activities He lists; they are the stuff of ordinary human life. But that is just the point. Those men of old were so taken up in the ordinary affairs of life that they took no notice of Noah. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.260

[11] [17:26-30] While believers sigh with growing ardor for the return of their Lord, carnal security more or less complete takes possession of the race. It is an epoch like those which have preceded all the great catastrophes of history. The business of earthly life is carried through with regularity; but religious feeling gradually disappears from the heart of men who have become secularized. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.405

**17:28-32 Even depraved Sodom is 'deleted' for apparently which 'sins'? (Ezek.16:49,50) Are gross sins even on the table? (Here we have more than a hint of wherefrom gross preoccupations arise! - 2 Tim.3:1-5)**

[12] [17:28,29] The Christian message is not for those who think that they deserve a better fate than their neighbours, but for those who, in the midst of universal indifference and complacency, realise the desperateness of their situation, and ask, "What must I do to be saved?" **T.W. Manson** *The Sayings of Jesus* p.144

[13] [17:30] People will be condemned not because they are

sinner above all sinners, but because they have been self-centred. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.261

[14] [17:32] Note that Christ says, "Remember," not "Behold." *Nothing that is in existence is appealed to, but only what has been told.* **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.409

**17:33-37 Seeking to save one's life, in this context, obviously implies the obsession with spending it in selfish pursuits. How, in contrast, will believers be 'losing their lives'? (vv.10,25; Acts 20:17-35, esp. vv. 24,25,33-35)**

[15] Thus the beings who shall have been most closely connected here below, shall, in the twinkling of an eye, be parted forever. **F. Godet** *Luke* p.407

[16] [17:37] Eagles neither fly in flocks nor feed on carrion. During the Crimean War, griffon vultures, which had previously been scarce round Sebastopol, collected in great numbers, "from the ends of the earth," as the Turks said. In the less general interpretation of this saying of Christ the [aeto] are the ministers of judgment which overtake the ungodly. A reference to the eagles of the Roman standards is not in point here, although it is possible Matt. 24:28. The patristic interpretation of the saints gathering round the glorified body of Christ is equally unsuitable to the context. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.410

**"Remember!"  
not  
"Behold!"**

## b. The Perseverance of the Saints (18:1-8)

**18:1-5 What shall be the inevitable cost for those who have their eyes on the clock, not on the Master? (Heb.12:1,2)**

[17] [18:5] On the other hand, we have the Jewish doctrine that God must not be wearied with incessant prayer. *Tanchuma*, fol. 15:3. A man ought not to pray more than three times a day. Hourly prayers are forbidden. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.411

**18:6-8a While disciples carry their undeserved cross, what consolation can they have? (Isaiah 63:9)**

[18] [18:6,7] ... the Greek is difficult and it may be understood as AV, 'though he bear long with them'. In this case the thought is that God delays the vindication, probably for a gracious purpose in strengthening His own as they endure hardship. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.263

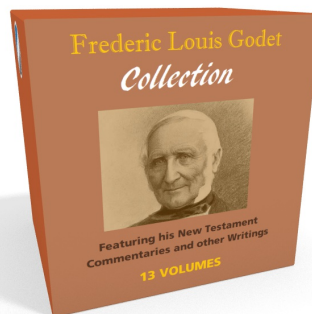
[19] If, then, He does not [immediately] deliver them, it is not from indifference; it is from long-suffering to their oppressors. **F. Godet** *Luke* p.408

[20] [18:7] The exact meaning of the different parts of the clause cannot be determined with certainty; but the general sense is clear enough, viz. that, however long the answer to prayer may seem to be delayed, constant faithful prayer always is answered. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.414

**18:8b A frightening question! (Matt.24:21,22)**

[21] [18:8] The answer to this desponding question, which seems, but only seems, "to call in question the success of our Lord's whole mediatorial work,"

has been given by anticipation 17:26: the majority, not only of mankind but of Christians, will be absorbed in worldly pursuits, and only a few will "endure to the end" (Matt. 24:12,13). **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.415



## **"When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"**

[22] But is there not a very close correspondence between the duty of perseverance in prayer, and the danger which the Church runs of being overcome by the carnal slumber which has just been described in the preceding portraiture? The Son of man has been rejected; He has gone from view; the masses are plunged in gross worldliness; men of God are become as rare as in Sodom. What is, then, the position of the Church? That of a widow whose only weapon is incessant prayer. It is only by means of this intense concentration that faith will be preserved. But such is precisely the disposition which, Jesus fears, may not be found even in the Church at His return. **Frederic Godet** *Luke* p.407