

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 17- Luke 17:11-21

282- The Kingdom of God- Part 2

June 21, 2015

Luke 17:11-21

11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.

12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him;

13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

14 When He saw them, He said to them, "**Go and show yourselves to the priests.**" And as they were going, they were cleansed.

15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice,

16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.

17 Then Jesus answered and said, "**Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine — where are they?**

18 "**Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?**"

19 And He said to him, "**Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.**"

20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;**

21 **nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."**

To the Glory of God

Now last week- we began to examine what Jesus was talking about in this Passage and we saw several things. First of all when Jesus said in verses 20&21:

**20 ..."The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;
21 nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."**

He was saying at least three things:

1. He Himself *is* the Kingdom of God
2. The Kingdom of God is *present* in one sense
3. The Kingdom of God is *future* in another sense

So we are to link the concept of the Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ *personally*- in both His first Advent and His Second Coming. So in that sense- there is no Kingdom of God *at all* absent the physical Presence of Jesus Christ, and, therefore- the Kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is manifested in His glorious and Powerful Presence.

So it is true to say that the Kingdom of God has *already* come, while it is equally true to say that the Kingdom of God is *yet* to come. So the Kingdom of God has *already come* in many, many ways, and the Kingdom of God *will come* in its "consummated fullness" at some point in the future- when Jesus returns to this earth.

So in the Incarnation of God- the "fleshing of God"- in the miraculous Act of God *inserting* Himself in to His Creation by taking on human flesh and being born as a baby and living as a real human Man for 33-1/2 years and then dying and rising from the dead 3 days later and then ascending into Heaven- Christ brought with Him a great manifestation of the Kingdom of God. For example- through His sinless Life, Vicarious Death by Crucifixion, and physical Resurrection- Jesus did many things already:

- ✓ He earned perfect Righteousness through His sinless Life
- ✓ He spoke perfect Truth
- ✓ He clarified the Old Testament that had become obscure
- ✓ He proved His full Deity through signs and wonders and miracles
- ✓ He satisfied the Justice of God against the sins of all of God's elect

- ✓ He destroyed the tyrannical power that sin and satan had over God's elect
- ✓ He received God's Approval through His Resurrection
- ✓ He magnified the Glory of God's Grace
- ✓ He magnified the Glory of God's Justice
- ✓ He brought in the infinitely superior New Covenant
- ✓ He created the Church

So in *that* sense- the Kingdom of God has *already* come. And yet as we saw last week- we have still not received the *fullness* of the Kingdom- which will be manifested when Jesus returns. So we see that many Kingdom blessings have *already* been fulfilled- but the final consummation is still in the future.

So the New Testament describes all of history in two distinct "Periods" or "Ages":

1. This present Age- with its Sin and Misery and Satanic Power
2. The Age to come- with its Righteousness and Wholeness and Freedom and Joy

And so the *mystery* of the Kingdom is that these two Ages have now *intersected* with the Coming of Jesus. They now overlap. The Age to come has in a sense- already begun while this present Age *endures* yet for a time. So it is *not* correct to think that we live *between* the two Ages- we must see ourselves living *inside* both of these two Ages- *simultaneously*. For example:

- ✓ We have already tasted the "**powers of the age to come**" (**Hebrews 6:5**)
- ✓ Yet we look for a City that has foundations- Whose Architect and Builder is God (**Hebrews 11:10**)
- ✓ We know that Christ already purchased our ultimate healing (**1Peter 2:24; Matthew 8:17**)
- ✓ Yet we still groan with sickness now (**Romans 8:23; 2Corinthians 4:16**)
- ✓ We have already passed from death to life spiritually (**1John 3:14**)

- ✓ Yet we still die physically (**1Corinthians 15:26**)
- ✓ We already have the sanctifying Spirit as a down payment of our inheritance (**Ephesians 1:14**)
- ✓ Yet the war between flesh and Spirit goes on every day (**Galatians 5:16–18**)

- ✓ We have already been acquitted of all sin in Christ (**Romans 5:1**)
- ✓ Yet we must go on every day praying, "**forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us**" (**Matthew 6:12**)

- ✓ We already have our citizenship in the Kingdom of God (**Philippians 3:20**)
- ✓ Yet for now must still submit in measure to the rulers of this world (**Romans 13:1**).

- ✓ And while it is true that every blessing of the Age to come is already ours in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**)
- ✓ It is also true that God wills for us to come into our inheritance patiently. (**The Acts 14:22**)

...and these Truths are *not* contradictions- they make up what is called "The Mystery of the Kingdom of God".

Now the very first formal and official Protestant Body of believers that was formed on the heels of the Reformation back in the 16th Century were the Anglicans. It wasn't the Lutherans or the Baptists or all the small little independent Reformed Churches like we see today.

The people that God used to blaze the trail to restore the Church back to her original, Biblical Pattern were formally and officially *excommunicated* by the visible Church- which *refused* their call to repent- and these men were excommunicated for several reasons- two of the main ones were what we studied at the beginning of this year:

- A. Sola Fide
- B. Sola Scriptura

... which are Latin phrases that mean:

- A. Sola Fide- *By Faith Alone*

B. Sola Scriptura- *From the Scriptures Alone*

And those are *not* simply academic concepts but are, in fact- the *bedrock* of Biblical Christianity. And I want to be crystal clear about this- if you deny, reject, or miss-represent either or both of those two concepts- you no longer *have* Biblical Christianity. In other words- without whatever institution you are a part of believing and teaching that the Justification of lost sinners is by Grace through Faith alone- absent any and all human works, and without that institution believing and teaching that the Righteousness that it takes to allow us entrance into Heaven is an “external, foreign, and alien Righteousness” that is “credited or imputed” to us by Faith alone (Sola Fide), and without that institution believing and teaching that all beliefs, and all teaching, and all doctrine, and all instruction, and all correction is to be from the Scriptures and from the Scriptures alone (Sola Scriptura)- you do not *have* a Christian Church. Absent either or both of these concepts- you have a *man-made* and a *false* religion that cannot forgive a single sin or save a single soul. And all this began with Martin Luther in 1517.

But the first *formal* and *official* Body that came forth from that excommunication, and which both formally and officially ascribed to the tenets that were brought forth in the Protestant Reformation was the Anglicans in 1534. And so almost all of the early Reformers and almost all of the Puritans were all Anglicans.

And after a few years- there was a group within the Anglicans who agreed with almost every single tenet of the Reformation but who *disagreed* with this newly formed Body about the secular King being a part of the Church Leadership- even if he wasn't saved. And *that* group- led by a man named John Knox- eventually broke off from the Anglicans over that and a few other issues, and they officially and formally formed another Body of Protestants and became what is now called “The Presbyterians” in 1560.

And later on- there was a group of people within the newly formed Presbyterians- who became disturbed over the concept of infant baptism and a few other issues, and they eventually broke off and formally and officially formed *another* Body of Protestants that eventually became known as “The Baptists” led by John Smyth in 1609- which denote that they believe and teach that those who are baptized in water by immersion should be believers first.

So the Baptists broke off from the Presbyterians and the Presbyterians broke off from the Anglicans and the Anglicans broke off from the visible Church on the earth at that time that eventually became what we know today as the Roman "church".

So if you were to examine what the Anglicans and the Presbyterians believe as far as those two "Sola's" and the fundamentals of Biblical Christianity go- we would all be in perfect harmony. In fact- we would all be in perfect harmony about almost every single issue with the exception of the few issues that I mentioned.

Now the point that I am making by telling you all this- is that the main reason why the Anglicans allowed the secular King to be in leadership in the Church goes back to their understanding of Sovereignty. They believed back then and they still believe today that since no secular ruler ascends into the throne without God allowing it- that the ruler- be it a king or a queen is God's ordained "choice", and, therefore- that ruler becomes the secular Head of the Church in Anglicanism.

And so, to an Anglican- the coronation of the ruler of the country is a *religious* event and not simply a secular one- and they are quite a sight to behold.

And the coronations of these rulers are held in the Church and they are designed on purpose to make a massive and even frightening impression on people because the king or queen holds absolute power and authority to do whatever he wills, whenever he wills, with whomever he wills. And this is what it means to be a sovereign monarch. And so the coronation of a monarch in a particular nation is meant to be a visible and physical manifestation of the invisible and eternal Sovereignty of God over the whole earth.

And so a coronation in those countries where Anglican Christianity is in the majority- is a grand event carried out in the most magnificent buildings with the most lavish kinds of clothes, attended by the most significant and important of all people on the face of the earth. And all through the coronation there are hymns played and sung, and there are prayers offered, and there are all the natural and physical signs of the power and signs of the privilege and signs of the authority. And these are the magnificent emblems of what it means to be the monarch- to have absolute supremacy and absolute sovereignty over the

people of that nation- where the only One Who is higher than the monarch is the Lord Christ Himself.

And it is symbolic of the grand and glorious Coronation that will occur when Jesus bursts through the clouds of Glory and comes back as King and Lord and Sovereign over the whole earth. And it will be then that all rebellion against God and His Christ will cease, and it is then when all sin will be vanquished because all unrepentant sinners will be vanquished. And it is then when all injustice and all crime and all poverty and all sickness and all evil and all wickedness and all war and all transgression will cease because the King has come and He has brought with Him the full consummation of the Kingdom of God.

And that is *why* every knee of every human- rich or poor- will bow, and that is why every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord- that Jesus is God- precisely because all rebellion against Who God is and what God has done and what God has said will be over, and everybody will be in one mind and one accord with Jesus and eternal Peace and Love and Joy will reign because Jesus has brought the Kingdom with Him!

And that will be the future manifestation of the Kingdom of God. And it will be glorious and powerful and breathtaking and frightening, and it will make the coronations of all the sinful kings of the earth pale in comparison to when the Lord comes back in the fullness of His glorious Kingdom.

But there was no such coronation at Jesus' first Coming. There was only the worship of a few low-life shepherds in a filthy stinking stable to bow down to a baby in a cow stall in a small insignificant village called Bethlehem. But this was attended by only a few people. And there was another coronation of sorts some time later when some Persian kings showed up and came to worship that same child and offered gifts- indicating that He was indeed a King- but this, too, was a very private event.

So Jesus' first Coronation was not like any other coronation. And that was true because Jesus' Kingdom was not like any other kingdom. It was Jesus Who told Pilate in **John 18:36b**:

... My Kingdom is not of this world ...

And yet the majority didn't believe Him. And even though many of them were the recipients of Kingdom healing and Kingdom deliverance and Kingdom miracles and Kingdom Power- they eventually called for this King to die- because Jesus didn't *look* like any king they were familiar with and He didn't act like a king. There was no pomp and circumstance to indicate the establishment of any Kingdom through Jesus at that time. There was no violent overthrow of the pagan Romans, no elevating of Jerusalem, no golden throne, no physical armies at His beckon call. There were no lords and ladies waiting on this King, no ambassadors from the nations of the world bowing before Him, no political elite gathered to pay homage. All that could be seen around this so-called King were some uneducated and violent fishermen, and some despised tax collectors, and few political terrorists, mixed in with some sexually immoral people- hardly the crowd to witness the coronation of a great and mighty King. Here is what the Apostle Paul said about those who attend to this King from **1Corinthians 6:9-10**:

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

10 nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

Now this is in line with most all coronations of most all kings. These kinds of dirty wicked people described here are never invited and they never are allowed to attend the coronation of the kings of the earth. But look at what Paul said next:

1Corinthians 6:11

Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

So the Bible says that *this* King is different than the other kings of the earth because *this* King has in attendance those who were *formally* the worst people on the face of the earth. And that is the great distinction between Biblical Christianity and every other man-made

religion in the history of the world. Christianity doesn't teach that good and nice and noble and holy and pure people are the ones that Jesus calls and the ones that Jesus draws and the ones that Jesus saves. No, the Bible says that God calls and draws and saves sinners. Look at what Paul said about this by turning to **1Corinthians 1:26-31**:

**26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;
27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,
28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
29 so that no man may boast before God.
30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,
31 so that, just as it is written, "*LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.*"**

So the initial coming of the Kingdom that was promised in the Old Testament and which was anticipated for centuries didn't look like any other kingdom on earth. The ongoing suffering at the hands of the brutal and pagan Romans who had occupied and subjugated the land of Israel was devastating and the collective sigh of the Jew was to desire the Kingdom that was promised.

But when Jesus came- He didn't look like a King at all. And when Jesus said that the Kingdom had arrived in Him- it sure didn't look like the Kingdom they were waiting for. And this is in large part *why* the Pharisees were convinced that Jesus was a phony and that He was a charlatan and a fraud- trying to pass Himself off to the people of Israel as a King, when obviously He wasn't a King and didn't have a Kingdom at all.

And the ultimate mockery was when they hung Jesus on the Cross and the sign that they put over the Cross in three different languages, so the world could see it, that read, "*This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*". This sign was put there with disdain and scorn and sarcasm that just dripped with hatred.

Yet Jesus talked about being a King all the time. And He talked about the Kingdom of God all the time. And He preached about the Kingdom, and then as He demonstrated the Kingdom right in front of them by His absolute Power over satan and all the demons, He said, "The Kingdom of God has come!"

But this just didn't fit the Jews' expectations. All this Kingdom talk and yet there was no visible signs of any Kingdom anywhere to be seen. The pagans still ruled the Land and the Jews were still being humiliated and the Gentile nations still didn't know or love or fear the God of Heaven. So where was the great coronation? Where was this King ruling in His Kingdom?

And Jesus knew what was on their minds. He understood that their view of what was supposed to happen when Messiah came and what God had actually said was two different things. Jesus knew that their eschatology was wrong and they had interpreted what God had promised wrongly- they didn't get it right, and so their view of the Messiah and their view of what He would do when He came was also off base.

Now Eschatology is a three dollar word for "the science of or the study of 'Last Things'". So Eschatology looks ahead and tries to interpret what God has promised in Scripture. Eschatology looks ahead at what will happen in the future and tries to make sense of it. And it's a pretty risky science, and the track record of people who engage in interpreting these future events is pretty bad. Most everybody- saved or not saved- who have tried their best to interpret the future based on what God has spoken infallibly in the Bible have got it wrong. And many of them have gotten it so wrong that their real bad eschatology has spawned all sorts of crazy cults and false teachings that border on being blasphemous.

For example- John Hagee is a very famous television preacher and he pastors a church in San Antonio Texas that has thousands and thousands of members. And without getting into his adulterous affair that disqualifies him from preaching in the first place- Hagee has developed a very seriously bad theology of Salvation based on his seriously bad Eschatology.

Hagee teaches that there are *two ways* to be saved. One is by being born again by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and the other is by being born a Jew. So in Hagee's view of Christianity- Jews are saved- not by

repenting and trusting in the finished Work of Jesus Christ- but simply by having the good fortune of being born into a Jewish home. So in this man's warped mind- Salvation by Grace through Faith only applies to Gentiles.

And you may ask, "*How in the world can somebody get so off base?*" And the answer is very simple. One step at a time. You see, as I have taught you over and over again- there is a very important Principle when it comes to Biblical Truth. And that is:

Every Doctrine Affects Every other Doctrine

Every Truth in the Bible is irretrievably connected to every *other* Biblical Truth. So much so- that if you change or get one essential Truth of Scripture wrong- that *misunderstanding* or that *wrong* understanding will change everything else you believe over time. And that is *why* we must take heed to ourselves that we not only read and study the Bible ourselves, and pray and beg God that we will get it right- but that we must also check ourselves with those who have come before us- to make sure that we are not departing from orthodox Christianity and wandering off into heresy or false teaching one step at a time. So always remember- two things:

1) *Nobody* is self-taught. *Everybody* is a student of somebody else. And those who *think* that they can study the Bible by themselves and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to them *directly* what the verse or Passage means without consulting the historical, literal, and grammatical context of that verse or Passage is merely confusing that with being both the Teacher and the student at the same time. And whereas that effort sounds so spiritual and so deep- it is simply nonsense and it is actually rebelling against the Will and Word of God.

2) God has already provided a way for us to learn Divine Truth. You see, the Bible says that God the Holy Spirit gave gifts to the Church. And *one* of those spiritual gifts was the gift of Teachers- men who were and are both morally and Biblically qualified to teach and explain the Truths of the Bible. And while it is true that since the very beginning- there have been many false teachers and antichrists who crept into the Church who brought terrible teachings with them- it is also true that

over the last 2,000 years- the Church has had literally millions of these God ordained Teachers who taught rightly. And God the Spirit would never lead anyone to violate the method that He Himself instituted for the study of the Scriptures. And so we who love and serve God in the 21st Century have a literal wealth of information that is available to us to use that will help us know what to believe and what to reject.

Now some would say, *"But, Brother Blair- what you are advocating is listening to Man; it is quenching the Spirit and following Man, and we need to listen to and follow God."* And my response is that *I'm* not advocating anything. The Bible teaches what I am saying, and, therefore, the one who *thinks* that God the Spirit and he have worked out a special arrangement that allows him to by-pass the Way that God already ordained for us to learn and understand Truth and get information directly from God has not actually accomplished what he is seeking for at all. All he has done is to successfully cut himself off from millions of wise and godly teachers over two millennia and has only *himself* for both the teacher and the student. And that, dear friends is the classic definition of the blind leading the blind.

Hagee developed his heretical view of Salvation very slowly- over many years- as his bad and wrong Eschatology pertaining to the Jew began to take over and overcome his entire theology about Salvation. In other words- once he got his Eschatology wrong- that poison warped what he believed about how lost people are saved. And one of the main fallacies that Hagee *continues* to exercise to this day is his absolute *refusal* to consult with any of the many Teachers that God the Holy Spirit provided throughout history. Hagee says that God showed him this *directly*. So in effect- Hagee has said that his own personal relationship with God is better and closer and less faulty that the collective wisdom of the Christian Church over two thousand years, and that, my brothers and sisters, is arrogance raised to an astounding level.

And the Pharisees of Jesus' day were doing the very same thing. All false teachers do the same thing. They achieve spiritual credibility in the eyes of the people by laying claim to a connection with God the Father and God the Son and a communication with God the Holy Spirit that very few have, and, therefore, they look high and lifted up to everybody else, and so by default they become indispensable to all of us mere mortals. But it is all a lie.

So let's get an idea of *why* the Jew got their Eschatology wrong by looking at what God had promised back in the Old Testament. Please turn with me to the Book of the Prophet **Joel 2**.

Now **Joel** is one of what is called "the *minor* Prophets". And they're not called that because what they say is not as important as what the "major" Prophets said. No, *all* of Scripture is inspired. They are called "minor" simply because their prophecies are *shorter* than the others. So Joel lays out for us the prophecies concerning the arrival of the King to establish His Kingdom. And Joel's prophecy involves not one- but two different aspects that are often overlooked:

1. Judgment on the ungodly
2. Protection and deliverance for the godly

And Joel talks about both Judgment and Deliverance in context as both groups are being ushered into the glorious Kingdom. So mixed in among the prophecies of glorious Deliverance are Promises of horrific Judgement. And Joel goes back and forth between both great and terrible prophecies- sometimes even in the same statement. And so before we look at **Joel**- I need to take just a moment to remind all of us of what the Coming of the Lord and the establishment of the fullness of the Kingdom at some point in the future is called by God. And that is found in **Malachi 4:5**

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

Notice that God spoke through the Prophet Malachi to say that the "Day of the Lord" was two things:

- A. Great
- B. Terrible

Now the Hebrew word that Malachi used that was translated into English here as "**Great**" means: *all-encompassing or pervasive*. It is the very same word that was used by Moses in **Genesis 6:5** to say that the wickedness of lost man was "great" in the earth or that it was all-

encompassing- or pervasive- meaning that it overshadows everything else and everyone else.

But the way that this word is used in this verse denotes *something all-encompassing that is highly anticipated, and something that people are waiting anxiously to see*. And so the Coming of Jesus Christ will overshadow everything else that everybody else is doing all throughout the world. In other words- the Coming of the Lord to this earth is bigger and more important and more pervasive than everything that all the people on the face of the earth are engaged in. And so when the Lord comes back- every activity by every human will stop precisely because saved people have been waiting anxiously for it to happen.

But then also notice that Malachi also said that the Day of the Lord's Coming will be "**Terrible**". And *that* English word comes from the Hebrew word that means: *something that produces fear and awe and reverence and terror and dread*.

So there is both terrible and unspeakable Judgment, and great and glorious Blessing when the Lord comes back in the fullness of His Kingdom. And so as you read **Joel**- keep in mind that he is not simply talking about the "Greatness" of the Coming of the Lord- but also the terrifying "Judgment".

Now Joel begins at the very outset of his prophecy with identifying this Event in **Joel 1:14&15**:

14 Consecrate a fast, Proclaim a solemn assembly; Gather the elders *And* all the inhabitants of the land To the house of the Lord your God, And cry out to the Lord.

15 Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

So here is a warning of great calamity and Judgment. And Joel describes this Judgment as,

... destruction from the Almighty

Now the "Coming of the King" is the "Day of the Lord". And the "Day of the Lord" in the second Coming of Jesus to this earth is *always* associated with Judgment- the *maximum* Judgment- a *final* kind of Divine Judgment. Now there are various "Days of the Lord" in the Old

Testament- which are times in which God sovereignly stepped in with great Judgment. But there is also a *culminating, eschatological, final* “Day of the Lord” that Joel also has in view here. And so he calls this particular final Judgment- a **destruction from the Almighty**. So when Jesus comes back- He will come to destroy all His enemies- which are the unrepentant ungodly.

But at the same time- this Day of the Lord will also be a time of great Salvation. It will be a time of amazing Blessing for the righteous. So if you go to the end of Joel’s prophecy in **Joel 3:18** he says,

18 And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the Lord To water the valley of Shittim.

19 Egypt will become a waste, And Edom will become a desolate wilderness, Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood.

20 But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations.

21 And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the Lord dwells in Zion.

Now the language here is not mere hyperbole. We know that mountains don’t literally drop sweet wine. We know that hills do not literally flow with milk. But what we also need to know is that this is not simply exaggeration as we know exaggeration. This is not a play on words. The colorful words and terms that Joel uses here and that Moses and David and that Isaiah and many of the OT writers used in different places is a style of writing that is called:

Hebraic apocalyptic poetry

And this is a form of writing that was common with the ancient Jews that was used to describe events and concepts that were too great or too wonderful for their minds to comprehend. For example- in **Psalms 18**- turn there with me- **Psalms 18:6**. There King David wrote in Hebraic apocalyptic poetry and said:

Psalms 18:6-19

6 In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.

7 Then the earth shook and quaked; And the foundations of the mountains were trembling And were shaken, because He was angry.

8 Smoke went up out of His nostrils, And fire from His mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down With thick darkness under His feet.

10 He rode upon a cherub and flew; And He sped upon the wings of the wind.

11 He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.

12 From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire.

13 The Lord also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.

14 He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.

15 Then the channels of water appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare At Your rebuke, O Lord, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

16 He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.

18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, But the Lord was my stay.

19 He brought me forth also into a broad place; He rescued me, because He delighted in me.

Now we commonly say that Scripture came to us by way of a mysterious process called "Inspiration" where Almighty God "breathed out" or "exhaled" Scripture to frail men -directly out of his Mouth. But, in reality- the God of the Bible is "immaterial" in that He is not limited by a physical Form or Body. So God doesn't have a mouth. So we know to take that phrase figuratively rather than literally. So while every word of the Bible is absolutely true and reliable and trustworthy and contains no error in part or in whole- it is also true that we do not take

all the words of the Bible- literally. We know to take *some* words and phrases "figuratively" or "spiritually".

So in **Psalm 18:6**- we know that David's cry did *not* come into God's literal Ear- because God doesn't have an Ear. All that David meant by using that form of apocalyptic poetry is that God heard his prayer. And we can take great confidence that God will hear our prayer as well- when we pray in Jesus' "Name" or because of and to the Glory of Jesus' Reputation, and when we pray according to God' Will. We just need to know that God doesn't have physical ears.

And we also know that in **Psalm 18:7** that the earth did not literally quake nor did the mountains literally tremble. So David was not saying that God caused a literal earthquake like He did with the Apostles in **The Acts 16**- but this is yet another example of this style of Old Testament writing- assuring David that after He heard- God *answered* his prayer.

And even if we never knew what this style of writing was called- most of us instinctively know what David meant when we read verses and passages like this. So we know that what God inspired these OT writers to say is true and correct and real and trustworthy and every single Word of Scripture is both inerrant and infallible- we also know that every word and term is not to be taken literally.

And the key in interpreting OT Prophecy is in knowing *when* to take the words of the Prophets literally and when to take them figuratively or spiritually. And that is harder than it may seem- which is why so many good and godly people get so many different takes on OT Prophecy.

That is why men like John Baptist got so disillusioned with Jesus and sent his two disciples to see if Jesus was really and truly the Messiah- even though he has already said about Jesus in **John 1:29**:

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

The problem was that John's Eschatology was all wrong. He had been taught by the Pharisees about what the Messiah was going to do when He arrived, and Jesus simply wasn't doing it. You see, John- like most all of the Jews back then didn't have any concept at all of Jesus coming *twice*- once as the mild Nazarene and the second time as the all-conquering King. They only understood the Messiah to come *once*. And

that omission was huge and it altered everything else. And it was a radical revelation when they finally figured it out. And that is why I have never taught on Eschatology before in my entire life. I am terrified of misleading people and I also have no desire to be deceived myself. And that is why I tell you that it is just so much easier to look back on actual events and see what God did than it is to look forward to try to interpret what God is yet to do. But I will do my best.

So the Prophet Joel used this kind of apocalyptic poetry, too- as did several of the OT writers. And so, for example- when Joel said,

Joel 3:18

And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the Lord To water the valley of Shittim.

... all he meant was that when the Lord comes- it will be a time of great or pervasive and immense Blessing. So back in **Joel 3:16&17** when he said,

The Lord is a refuge for His people and a stronghold to the sons of Israel." and **"You will know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain, Jerusalem will be holy."**

... we see the Promise of great Blessings and the Goodness of God when the Lord comes. So when Jesus comes back- there's going to be the rescue and the protection of the righteous, and God is going to send His King to establish His Throne in the earth and He's going to reign over the whole earth.

But what are the signs of this? What should they be looking for as an indication? Look with me to **Joel 2:1:**

"Blow a trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm on My holy mountain. Let the inhabitants of the land tremble for the day of the Lord is coming, surely it is near."

So we get a description. The Second Coming of the Lord will be what **Joel 2:2** says:

A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, *So* there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

And that seems to be fairly straight forward. But the key to try to understand what Joel is saying here lies in whether or not these signs and words are to be taken literally, or whether they are in that style of writing that tells us to take them figuratively. Many today think that these words of Joel right here are to be taken literally. And that may be true. Those people may be correct. But it is informative to know that that understanding is relatively new. It has only been in the last 150 years or so that the Church has taught that. And that means that for about 1,850 of the 2,000 year history of the Church- the collective wisdom of the God ordained Teachers of the Church have taught that these words of Joel right here are to be taken *figuratively* and *not* literally.

So what are we to do? Are we to grasp that the “darkness” that Joel prophecies here is a *literal* darkness that will spread over the world or is it a *spiritual* darkness that will permeate the minds and hearts of people? I personally lean to a *figurative* interpretation here rather than a literal one- but I also hold out the possibility that Joel could actually have a *dual* meaning in that it may be fulfilled in one sense literally and in another sense figuratively.

But I will make this promise to you as we begin to examine what Jesus said about “Last Things” through the remainder of **Luke 17**. I will do my level best, by God’s help, to get these verses right. But I ask you now to please pray for me over the coming weeks because whether we take these words literally or figuratively- one thing we know for sure- that the Lord Jesus is absolutely coming back to this earth. And this time He will come as King of all the kings and Lord of all the lords! And as the unsaved world will dread that terrible day- we await it with great anticipation.

So hang on to your hats. We are going to get into some Eschatology over the next several weeks as we examine what our Lord said in these amazing verses of **Luke 17**.

Amen. Let's pray

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.