



The Burning Bush

- Editor Alan Devar

Newsletter

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The Coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ



Scripture Reading:

Luke: 17:20-37

20 One day, the Pharisees asked Jesus, "When will the Kingdom of God come?"

Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God can't be detected by visible signs.[\[a\]](#) 21 You won't be able to say, 'Here it is!' or 'It's over there!' For the Kingdom of God is already among you.[\[b\]](#)"

22 Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see the day when the Son of Man returns,[\[c\]](#) but you won't see it. 23 People will tell you, 'Look, there is the Son of Man,' or 'Here he is,' but don't go out and follow them. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end

to the other, so it will be on the day[\[d\]](#) when the Son of Man comes. 25 But first, the Son of Man must suffer terribly[\[e\]](#) and be rejected by this generation.

26 "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. 27 In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building— 29 until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Yes, it will be 'business as usual' right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day a person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. A person out in the field must not return home. 32 Remember what happened to Lot's wife! 33 If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it. 34 That night two people will be asleep in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. 35 Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.[\[f\]](#)"

37 "Where will this happen, Lord?" [g] the disciples asked.

Jesus replied, "Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near." [h] (Luke 17: 26-30, NLT) (See footnotes of scripture reading below)



Introduction

You have just read a solemn piece of Scripture. It deals with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus himself articulated the events that will precede this great occasion. Matthew was the first to write of this discourse between Jesus and his disciples. (*Matthew 24:36-44*) Luke later outlines a conversation between our Lord and the Pharisees, later privately with his disciples. Jesus aroused the interest of both parties, so it was only natural that they would inquire about the timing and the associated signs. Jesus then explains two incredible developments—His glorious second coming and the severe judgment which unbelievers will experience.

Then, our Lord uses two analogies to describe the condition of people's lifestyles just before his reappearance. It will be, says Jesus, "**just as it was in the days of Noah**" and "**as it was in the days of Lot**". Jesus paints frightening scenarios of two being in the same bed, only one taken, the other left behind. Two working together at the mill, only one taken the other left behind.

And then, closer to home, two things caught my attention. One, during my morning devotion, I was somehow drawn to the hymn Henry Francis Lyte, the Anglican priest and poet, penned some 170 years ago (Lyte, H.F.:1847):

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

(Full hymn text below)

Lyte, dying of tuberculosis, felt the world closing in on him. In his distress, he penned this precious prayer. I will revert to this in just a moment.

Secondly, watching and listening to the news on television, I could not help but reflect on the deteriorating situations around the world. In all spheres of society, politically, economically and socially. As if this weren't enough, natural disasters worldwide seem to be increasing with disturbing intensity and frequency. Plagues and pandemics seem to move so quickly across the entire world, catching leaders of great nations almost by surprise. Just a casual glance at society's behaviour patterns signify a severe decline in morality. That over one half of the voter base in the world's leading nation could vote for a president in severe cognitive decline boggles the mind! Little wonder the Psalmist had written, "*The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand.*" (*Psalms 119:130*) Governments of poorer and trouble-torn nations have failed their citizens, with millions illegally entering wealthy countries searching for better opportunities. Not to mention the rise in apostasy where fake preachers are going to great lengths to deceive the elect, often lying to people that they are gods. We are not gods! Something awful is on the

rise! Lyte would have expressed this as "**the darkness deepens.**"

Society's godlessness will mirror the Days of Noah

Let's get back to our key text. The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come. Perhaps they were anxious about leadership positions in the New Kingdom; being religious leaders in the nation of Judah, their motives could have been somewhat nefarious. It was necessary also that Jesus educate his disciples so that they would ensure false teachers and false prophets did not deceive future believers. What is clear, said Jesus, is that no one except God the Father knows the timing of his return; that is his second advent. Many, we already know, have tried and to their folly have been proved wrong.

In response, Jesus highlights two historical incidents: Both familiar narratives.

1. Noah's warning of the imminent deadly flood in Genesis 6-7, and 2. The total devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.

Strange, isn't it, how history always seems to repeat itself. As the classics say, none as deaf as those who will not hear! Both these narratives have common elements:

1. People, said Jesus, were going about their everyday lives as if nothing unusual would happen. It was plain **business as usual!**

2. On that particular day, destruction from God struck suddenly and without further warning, surprising all of them just as a thief would in the stillness of the night. (Wilson, Dr Ralph F: 2021) The Apostle Paul reminds us: "*For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

Scenarios

Human nature is such that it hankers after success, prosperity, good health and financial sufficiency. Often totally oblivious of God's hidden hand of providence.

Most people crave the good life here on earth, chasing things that make for increased comforts and pleasures in this temporal life. Others work themselves to the bone to acquire more and more material goods, endlessly striving to store up wealth. Others pursue the dastardly pits of the world, attempting to satisfy their avarice and lusts.

Noah's Righteousness

Scripture draws attention to a righteous man called Noah, who made God his priority. He heard God speak; he believed what God said and carried out his orders with meticulous diligence. He was so close to God that the Bible notes: "*he walked in intimate fellowship with God*" (Gen. 6:9).

Saints Often Walk Alone (With God)

Just for the record, there was another person who walked with God. Can you recall who he was? Correct! It was Enoch (Gen. 5:22-24). Listen to this beautiful picture Scripture paints. Enoch walked with God some 300 years, getting closer and closer to God until on one special day, God said, "Enoch, I'm afraid you've come too far; you can't go back now; you're staying right here; with me! What a marvellous God!

Most times, when I read of Enoch, I am reminded of George Matheson, blind and helpless; comforted by God the Holy Spirit; he penned that much-loved hymn:

"O Love that will not let me go; I give my weary soul to thee."

(See full text below) (Hymnary.org.
https://hymnary.org/text/o_love_that_wilt_not_let_me_go)

Saints often walk alone, separated from the secular, Noah, Enoch and Lot, and I would imagine many

others lived in such closeness with God. Jeremiah, Elijah and Elisha, great prophets, often underestimated by man but well understood and sustained by God through the manifestation of His Holy Spirit. So it should be with those who wait, moment by moment, in eager anticipation longing for the return of him who loved us enough to lay down his very life!

Lot's Righteousness

Lot, Abraham's nephew, on the other hand, had got himself into an awful mess. You will recall how their herdsmen quarrelled over grazing land; Lot chose the lush pastures adjacent to Sodom and finally settled in this glitzy but very ungodly city (Gen. 13). The Apostle Peter tells us why Lot was considered righteous. First, he believed in Abraham's God. Secondly, Lot was a holy man. ***He kept himself apart/separated from the sinful habits of the Sodomites.*** It irked his soul daily to see their immoral and lawless deeds (2 Peter 2:7-9). The rescue of the righteous, Lot and Noah, unquestionably vindicate God. Not that the Holy One requires vindication by man. God remembers the righteous! He rescues them from the destruction he rains on the rebellious wicked.

Lot's Wife's Indiscretion

The story of Lot's wife sends a chilling message to our souls. She disobeyed the angel's instructions and looked back at the burning city. The city of her birth, where her family, friends and assets are left abandoned. Sadly, she ends up a pillar of salt and sulphur, a rock-like substance, a similar fate as all the other inhabitants of Sodom.

Warnings to Present-day Society

How exactly, people may be asking, do these illustrations correlate with the end of this age and the second coming of Christ?

Let's reflect for a moment on Lyte's hymn:

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

Come, Lord! Says Lyte, come close to me. Envelope me, shield me, shelter me, cover me, protect me! The world is getting darker; godlessness and lawlessness (wickedness) are increasing exponentially. Can you see the prophetic nature of this hymn?

A Pertinent Question

Have you ever paused to consider the growing darkness in the world today? Does it trouble you as much as the sin of the Sodomites irked Lot? Are you, like Noah, warning those around you of the coming judgement?

As believers, Jesus commissioned us to go and tell. *"Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20). What then must we tell those to whom we are called and sent? We must preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its simplicity! We ought not to be ashamed, for it is a Gospel that genuinely works! No one will escape the coming judgement.

Hear the Apostle John on the subject:

16 "For this is how God loved the world: He gave[g] his One and only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world but to save the world through him.

18 "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's One and only Son. 19 And the judgment is based on this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil."

(John 3:16 - 19)

Read the Signs At Your Doorstep

Christians should never allow our minds to become clouded or conditioned by the evil that prevents us from seeing the wood for the trees. All Bible-believing Christians should be able to see and discern the looming calamity. Many so-called Christians today are indifferent to or desensitised to the buildup of godlessness in the world. In our country alone, we see the devastating consequences of unbelief and syncretisation of the Faith.

The culture of bribery has permeated our nation from the very top to grassroots levels laying bare every thread of integrity in social, political and business transactions. God hates the giving and taking of bribes! Hear what he has to say:

*"For I know the vast number of your sins and the depth of your rebellions. You oppress good people by taking **bribes** and deprive the poor of justice in the courts." (Amos 5:12)*

*"You rulers make decisions based on **bribes**; you priests teach God's laws only for a price; you prophets won't prophesy unless you are paid. Yet all of you claim to depend on the Lord. "No harm can come to us," you say, "for the Lord is here among us." (Micah 3:11)*

*"Fear the Lord and judge with integrity, for the Lord our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of **bribes**." (2 Chronicles 19:7)*

You see, a nation cannot relegate God to the background and expect to prosper – Israel did this and failed – we must take note!

Jesus said, *"For apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5c). We understand from Scripture **'the hand of God'** was removed from Israel, and she crumbled into oblivion. Imagine a South Africa where God is sovereign– the Faith not syncretised – honesty is the order of the day, and the One God of the New Covenant reigns.

Let's now bring this to a close.

Reflection

To reiterate, Jesus told his disciples they would receive no particular signal or sign but to take cognisance of the following:

1. He will appear when nobody is expecting him.
2. His appearance will be sudden, like a thief in the night.
3. Time to decide to follow him will have passed.
4. Money or material possessions will have no value.
5. He will separate people, some for salvation, others for judgment.
6. Everyone will see him come (*"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and **every eye** shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."*)(Revelation 1:7, KJV)

All believers or disciples must be ready and watchful, lest they be lured into a state of spiritual lethargy and miss the second advent of our Lord. The prophet Isaiah implores:

6 "Seek the Lord while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

7 Let the wicked change their ways

And banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them.

Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously."

(Isaiah 55:6-7)

When Jesus makes his sudden appearance, there won't be time to repent or remedy our wrongs. Now is the time, dear friends!

The Apostle Peter issues a warning in this vane:

*"First of all, you must understand that in the last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.'... But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: **With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. **He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.***

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

*"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? **You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.** That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. **But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.**" (2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-13)*

The Lord grant you strength as you ponder this message and seek the ancient path. My prayer is that you will seek the way of holiness and righteousness which leads the disciple to the joy of salvation.

Prayer

Father, we are again reminded that you may appear at any moment to take us home with you. What a joyous occasion that will be! We tremble at the hearing of the terrible devastation that will follow. Many mock and scoff, but we thank you, dear Lord, for warning us that such godlessness would prevail in the end time.

Shake us awake! Help us not to be lured to sleep by the unbelief and the scoffing around us. Help us all to be ready for Jesus' sudden coming. Keep us watchful and waiting.

Teach us not to cling to material goods but rather to fix our eyes to be ever watching for the appearing of our Lord. Grant that we may spread with urgency this message of hope.

In the Saving Name of Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen.

Footnotes to our key text

- a. 17:20 Or *by your speculations.*
- b. 17:21 Or *is within you* or *is in your grasp.*
- c. 17:22 "Or long for even one day with the Son of Man." "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.
- d. 17:24 Some manuscripts do not include *on the day.*
- e. 17:25 Or *suffer many things.*
- f. 17:35 Some manuscripts add verse 36, *Two men will be working in the field; one will be taken, the other left.* Compare Matt 24:40.
- g. 17:37a Greek "*Where, Lord?*"
- h. 17:37b Greek "*Wherever the carcass is, the vultures gather.*"

All Scripture quoted is from the New Living Translation Bible, unless otherwise stated. See Acknowledgements.

LUKE 17:20-37 NLT - The Coming of the Kingdom - One day
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=LUKE+17:20-37&version=NLT>

Acknowledgements

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2. Dr Ralph F Wilson, Jesuswalk.com

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3. Abide With Me. Modern Hymns. Henry Francis Lyte. 1909-14
<https://www.bartleby.com/45/2/133.html>

4. Christian Hymns | Hymnary.org.
<https://hymnary.org/hymnal/CH1963>

5. The Presbyterian Hymnal: hymns, psalms, and spiritual <https://hymnary.org/hymn/PH1990/384>

Full Texts of Hymns quoted above (2)

Hymn: Abide with Me (Henry Francis Lyte: 1847)

*1 Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
the darkness deepens; Lord, with me, abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

*2 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O thou who changest not, abide with me.*

*3 I need thy presence every passing hour.
What but thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like thyself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.*

*4 I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me.*

*5 Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes.
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.*

*(Abide with me: fast falls the eventide |
Hymnary.org.
[https://hymnary.org/text/abide_with_me_fast_falls_t
he_eventide](https://hymnary.org/text/abide_with_me_fast_falls_t
he_eventide))*

Hymn: O Love That Will Not Let Me Go (George Matheson 1842 - 1906)

*1 Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.*

*2 O Light, that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,*

*That in Thy sunshine's blaze it's day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*3 O Joy, that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.*

*4 O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.
(George Matheson | Hymnary.org)*

End



Thank you for taking the time to read my article, "The Coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ" We pray that every reader will be blessed as they read and share this article.

Alan Devar

Editor – The Burning Bush



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