



How We Wait for Christ's Return

Luke 17:22-25

October 9, 2022

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

So, this is really just the beginning of Luke and eschatology or the eschatology that he records from Jesus. But let's begin, just by reading the text that we'll cover today versus 22 to 25. But I'm going to start back in Luke 17:20, so follow along as I read, "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he," that is Jesus, "answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' For behold, the kingdom of God'

is among you, it 'is in the midst of you.'}} And he said to the disciples, 'The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, "Look, there!" or "Look, here!" Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.'"

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

End of the 70s, ten million copies in circulation, and I guarantee you, it's influence far outweighs its substance. But

from a publishing perspective, Lindsay's timing was perfect. Modern State of Israel was barely two decades old. Israel had just won the six-day war against an Arab alliance. The Soviet Union loomed large with the threat of Megadeth, was to establish a ten-nation coalition.

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

This new generation of evangelicals is weaned on a sensationalistic approach to eschatology; an approach involving headline reading and date setting, which is precisely what Jesus warns us against doing in Luke 17. The book itself was based on outlines from Lindsey's dispensational eschatology courses at Dallas Seminary, but it was presented in a colloquial form, like

science fiction writing, kind of mixed with some tabloid style sensationalism. And credit for that really goes to Lindsay's ghost writer, Carol C. Carlson. She's the actual author of the book, though Lindsay's name was on the cover and got the public recognition. He was the smiling face of the entire movement.

What was published in, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, is more of a, really more of a caricature of premillennial eschatology; one that threw off restraints of a more sober minded, and exegetically grounded, and theologically defensible theology of actual premillennial scholars. Whatever protests may have come out then, from whatever quarter, maybe from more careful and cautious corners of the premillennial seminaries, it's easy to see how any of those protests, at the time, were muted, and subdued, and dismissed. I mean, who could argue with the numbers.

So, for a pragmatically minded, consumer driven public, for people who had been groomed on the Billy Graham style crusades, the Armenian form of revivalism, decisionism, easy believism, the conscious, and unapologetic emphasis on success; counting

the numbers of conversions, or, as they say, counting nickels and noses, American evangelicals were uninterested, frankly, in exercising discernment; unconcerned about this sensationalized, headline grabbing eschatology.

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

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



a marketing machine that sold products to the tune of billions of dollars to the evangelical public.

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

Some see all this publicity as a good thing. As they say, any publicity is good publicity, right? That's a marketing guy speaking. Even if it's wrong? Is that good? We're Christians, after all, we're people of the book, people of the truth; even if it's in error. Even if the end result is, that it inoculates people against a true reading of Scripture. Is that good? There's a verse from the prophet Hosea that comes to my mind, "Whoever sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind." And friends, we are reaping it now for sure.

GRACE CHURCH



Grace

Whenever we take the Bible out of its sacred form and we publish it in a profane form, we trivialize the truth. That happened in Mel Gibson's, *The Passion for the Christ*. It's happening again with this series called, *The Chosen*. And as long as there are consumers, the truth will continue to be profaned in this way.

The Bible is not entertainment for the masses. The Bible is the holy Word of God. It is written as a sacred book, part of a sacred Canon. It's meant to be preached. The truth of it is meant to be worshipped. The God of this truth is to be worshipped in the, the, sacred areas of the church. It's not meant to be peddled, and broadcast, and publicized, like cheap entertainment and pulp fiction.

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



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

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

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

Instead of waiting around for Christ to come and bring in the kingdom, why not stop reading headlines, get off the couch, follow King Jesus in victory, and take the kingdom that he won. That's the message coming out of some quarters, rather loudly. There are good reasons to reject the Postmillennial position. Some of them are right here in Luke 17.

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

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

I do not want to see a new generation of Christians, not as long as I can help it, not as long as they're under this influence of this church. I don't want to see a new generation of Christians like those untaught generations of revivalism and the Jesus movement. I don't want to see a generation of Christians and young people duped, yet again, by an exegetically weak, hermeneutically inconsistent, and theologically unsound approach to eschatology or any other 'ology' in Scripture.

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

We also have to look at the big picture and hold those two things that seem to be in tension. We need to bring them into harmony together and that is hard, hard work. And anybody that

says, Oh it's just the plain sense, plain reading, it's easy. Don't believe that. It's tough. It's tough work. We did some of that work last week together, didn't we?

Talked a lot last week about the mediatorial kingdom of God. That's not language we typically walk around using, as we go to King Soopers and go to Safeway and all that. Hey, what do you think about the mediatorial kingdom of God? Yeah, five more apples, please. You know, we don't do that. But we talked about that to get some context, Bible context, recreate the historical background that allows us, maybe, to hear what Jesus is saying through first century Jewish ears. We tried to work hard at that last week.

The Bible shows the kingdom of God to be a literal, visible physical kingdom. It's the restored kingdom of David. It's a physical and temporal reality, that is in a physical place, at an actual time. It's a mediatorial kingdom. It's ruled by David's greater son, Jesus, God's messiah. The Pharisees failed completely to recognize him, as such, which is revealed in their question. Look at verse 20, "Being asked by the Pharisees when

the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that could be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' Or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.'"

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

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

He came preaching the good news of the kingdom. He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God validated his message with divine miracles, and these miracles of supernatural power were kingdom power, and that power was a gracious power. Jesus didn't go, off, around snuffing people out, snuffing out Pharisees, and killing Sadducees with his power. No, he healed. He cast out demons. He healed people of leprosy. He created food out of nothing and gave it to people. He raised a widow's son from the dead. It was gracious. It was kindness itself. It was goodness of God on display in this manifestation of kingdom power.

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

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The kingdom of God will come, and when it does come, it's not a spiritualized, invisible rule of Christ in the heart. Talked about that last week. It's as visible and manifest as the prophets expected it to be. That's what will happen when it does come. And when the kingdom comes, contra postmillennialism, it will come suddenly and supernaturally. It is not subject to observation. It's not something that Christians usher in. It's not something that they can see; not something they can perceive. It's not something, by hitting all the languages of, in the 10-40 window, we're all of a sudden going to usher in the coming of Christ because we've, we've, completed the great commission. That's ludicrous. But, more to say on that next week.

Now verse 22, Jesus turns to address his disciples, says there, "He said" to his disciples, "to the disciples, 'The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, you will not see it. And they will say to you, "Look, there!" or "Look, there!" Do not go out or follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. First he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.'"

We'll divide that section up into three points. For this morning, you might call this our, think about this sermon as speaking to our eschatological orientation. Or let's break that down; How we should be thinking about the last days; How we should be thinking about end times; what's our attitude, how it should be framed toward the future.

This section tells us not just, what to think, but it tells us, how to think about Christ's return, and how to wait for his return. So much here I, I, just wish I had several hours, that I could just run to my hearts' content, until I really do run out of notes. But I'm afraid I'd lose all of you. So. we're going to keep to three points.

Here's the first, number one: The Disciples' Expectation. Number one, the disciples' expectation. The disciples' expectation, verse 22, Jesus said to the disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, you will not see it." Pharisees had asked about the coming of the kingdom of God, and as we noted the last time,

three times that expression in verses 20, 21, three times the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God.

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

So, what's the significance? I'd need to be really brief here about the significance of the title, the Son of Man. I've actually covered this in a sermon I did years ago. I think it's called, *The Full Authority of the Son of Man*. I think that's what it's called. You can look it up on the website, if you want to unpack this further. But just to be brief, for the sake of time, first subpoint A.

You can call this subpoint A. What's the significance of the title, the Son of Man? Subpoint A: The Son of Man refers to Jesus as the federal head of humanity. Federal head of humanity, that is just a fancy way of saying he represents us. He represents a new race of people just as Adam represented all of humanity, when he fell into sin. Jesus represents all of his people, when he does what is righteous.

You can look at Psalm 8:3. Just jot down Psalm 8:3 and also jot down Hebrews 2, 6 to 9, to see the writers' argument and how he used Psalm 8:3. You can look at Luke's genealogy in chapter 3 of Luke. It traces Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam, as the son of God. He is the true son of Adam and in him God raised up the last Adam, his own son Jesus Christ to fulfill what Adam failed to do. Jesus is the ideal man and he is our perfect representative head.

There's another significance of the Son of Man, comes out of Ezekiel and you write down subpoint B here. In Ezekiel's prophecy there are, and you can just write down subpoint B, and

uses, write down: Mediator. Mediator. In Ezekiel's prophecy, no less than 93 uses of that title, son of man: 93! You take the Gospels together 78 times; Ezekiel itself, one book, 93 uses of son of man, and God uses that title, son of man, to refer to Ezekiel.

He calls Ezekiel the son of man. He set Ezekiel apart as a prophet for a mediatorial role and, and, when he teaches Ezekiel, and trains Ezekiel, to be a mediator, he teaches him to see people from God's perspective. Ezekiel's there to preach to the people, to pray for the people, to minister to them. But before he gets involved in that work, he needs to see these people as God sees them.

God treats Ezekiel, as a representative member of the human race, and yet he chose Ezekiel out of the human race. He showed Ezekiel the sins of the people, so that this son of man would learn to sympathize with God first, with holiness first, and to see the people as God sees them, as utterly sinful and unholy. In fact, if you just write down Ezekiel 8, you can see that chapter, in particular, unpacks this in graphic detail, vivid

detail. But the son of man, to represent humanity, well, Ezekiel must sympathize with God's holiness. He has to feel, as it were, God's indignation over sin. And line up with God's interests.

So, the title, son of man, refers to the federal or representative head of all humanity. It refers to the one who is a mediator, who sympathizes first and foremost with God and his concern for holiness and righteousness. And then, just write down subpoint C, the Son of Man, you know, looking through Ezekiel is the final mediatorial king. He is the one who will rule over the kingdom of God.

Turn to Daniel Chapter 7. I didn't have you turned to other texts, but I do want to show you this in Daniel Chapter 7 and see this for yourself. Hold a finger in Luke 17 and go back to Daniel 7. Daniel writes in Daniel 7, starting back in verse 9. He's, Daniel, se, says, "As I looked, thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days took his seat;" that's God the father, the Ancient of Days, "his clothing was white as snow, the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames;" "Burning fire. A stream of fire came out from before him."

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

And then verse 13 says this, Daniel says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one coming out of the clouds of heaven," by the way, "like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him, his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed."

That is the same Son of Man, by the way, who speaks in Psalm 2 verse 7, "I will tell of the decree:" says the Son of Man. "The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of

the Earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a Potters vessel.'"

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

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

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

And verse 25 says, "He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." All mankind will have 1000 years to see what God's righteousness looks like, when it is enforced here upon the earth, in a visible kingdom. According to Revelation 20, verses 1 to 8, Satan and demons are, are, going to be bound during this time, cast into the abyss, unable to roam the Earth, as they do now. And during this time men will still sin. We don't have the excuse anymore: The devil made me do it.

During this time, Christ will rule and reign. He will break and dash into pieces anybody who rebels against his authority.

During this time, Christ will vindicate God's righteousness, because all the promises of God, to judge the nations, to restore Israel, all will be fulfilled in Christ by his rule, by his power, by his authority, and in his reign, to vindicate the faithfulness and the truth of God.

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

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

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

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

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

means, strong desire, earnestly desire, to long for. In a negative sense, it's actually used of passionate lust. So, in a positive sense, it's to earnestly desire, to greatly long for.

Listen, I consistently hear that from Christians, from all of you. You, your strong desire and eager longing for the return of Christ, for the second coming. To see just one of the days of the Son of Man. Just one of the days of the Son of Man to see him ruling in righteousness. Can you imagine that, in your mind's eye, what that might be like? Just one of the days, to see him enforcing justice in the laws of the land and just as swiftly.

Just one of the days of the Son of Man reigning, here on Earth, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He's not a politician. He's not angling for reelection. Ever. He's not making promises he can't keep. He doesn't sway with the cultural tide. Put his finger into the wind and see which way the breeze is blowing. He's not a congressman. He doesn't spend money he taxed from the public. He doesn't make laws he doesn't have to follow. He himself loves the righteousness of God, and he enforces what he

loves. He doesn't follow the pollsters and legislate, only that morality that suits a wicked and depraved people. No, he loves the law of God.

Jesus is an eternal king. He spends freely from a universal reserve of infinite resources. He doesn't need taxes. He speaks, he wills, he decides with perfect wisdom, with uncontested authority. He acts with almighty power. Who can stay his hand? His judgments are true and right. His laws are just and equitable. His justice is swift, without partiality and yet it's always mixed with mercy.

And yet Jesus tells his disciples, many of these who will be the very first members of the church, Jesus set their expectations by saying, "Though you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man. You will not see it." You won't see it, sad. Nation of Israel rejected its Messiah. Times of refreshing are postponed for them. The coming of the millennial kingdom of Christ is on hold. This is all according to the sovereign plan of God, by the way. "The mystery of the church, hidden for ages

and generations", Colossians 1:26, "but now revealed to his Saints."

So, in this church age, the disciples of Jesus, they need to set their expectations accordingly. It's gonna be awhile. What are our expectations? Rather than experiencing the times of the Messiah, the days of the Son of Man, where he reigns visibly from Jerusalem, disciples need to prepare themselves, for enduring a season of waiting, to wait in hope, to wait righteously, but waiting. This is our righteous expectation that, we are waiting for the Lord's return and waiting is what characterizes Christians.

Paul commended the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:7, they were those who "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.'" He said to the Thessalonians, they set their expectations accordingly. They "serve the living and true God." In, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "they wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

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

From Titus 2:11 and following says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people and training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." You want, young men, you want to know what true manhood looks like, right there; Renouncing ungodliness, renouncing worldly passions, living self-controlled, upright and godly lives in the present age. That's manhood. That's what it takes to be a good husband. That's what it takes to be a good father.

That's what it takes to be a good church member. That right there, verse 12, Titus 2. And why would we do that? Why would we do that? Why would we live that way? Because we are, verse 13, "waiting for our blessed hope, waiting for the appearing of the



glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Young men out there, are you using your energy, and passion, and strength, in a zeal for holiness? Zealous for good works. Now, our longing for Jesus' return, Jesus tells us here, that it creates a certain vulnerability in us, a vulnerability of longing. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, doesn't it? But the desire fulfilled, as the tree of life, and ohh, how much we want to take a shortcut to the desire fulfilled. Ignorantly zealous and unscrupulous people, they'll take, vantage, advantage of that desire of ours.

Brings us to a second point. They take advantage by what? Selling books, peddling all kinds of junk, getting us distracted in all kinds of Internet rabbit holes, so we can go down and chase forever, right? We need to be warned against this. This brings us to a second point, versus 23 and 24: The Disciples' Protection.

We talked about the disciple's expectation, now the disciple's protection. Protection against what? Against what I just said. Against being distracted by false reports of the second coming. Look at verse 23, "They will say to you, 'Look, there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them." Don't do it. "For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so the Son of Man will be in his day." You're not gonna miss it.

Jesus provides, here in these two verses, his disciples with three layers of protection. Three layers of protection against false reports about his return. The first layer of protection is, just in kind of the, the, plain fact of identifying false reports. Identifying anything that sounds like this. That's protection in and of itself. Ju, just discern that!

They'll say to you, or really the verb here is an active voice, so it's, they will be saying to you, that is, Get used to it, folks, it's not going to end. The books are still going to be published and all the media is going to come out. Get used to

it. They will be saying to you, active voice over and over, repeatedly with regularity, as infinitum, ad nauseam. "Look, there! Look, here!"

We talk about Internet media and all the people behind the Internet media, all the brilliant minds, psychologists and techno guys, wizards, and all that stuff. They're in the distraction business. They're attention merchants. They wanna grab a hold of your mind, and your eyeballs, and hold on to you. I don't remember where I heard this, but it was recently, where I heard this, either heard it or read it, but it was some executive at Netflix and they said, what is your greatest competitor to the attention of the people you're trying to hold on to? And they said, sleep. Sleep. They wanna rob you of sleep to hold on to your attention. And have you binge all night.

You know, there are attention merchants in the evangelical world, too. We need to watch out for them. Verse 23, "They'll say to you, 'Look, there!'", 'Look, here!'" Don't go out and follow them. Don't go out and follow them. In verse 21, back in verse 21, when Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, it was this, it

was, "They will not say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'Look, there!'" That is, they will 'not,' in verse 21, they will not, be pointing to legitimate signs of the kingdom coming. "For behold," King Jesus says, "the Kingdom of God is among you, it's in your midst." I'm right here, folks.

The signs were abundant in Jesus' ministry. They were resplendent. So, if they missed them, they'll see no other signs, since that's what verse 21 is talking about. Here in verse 23, which seems like a contradiction, but it's not, but it says, 'not', they will not say, but they will be saying. They will be saying, 'Look, here!', 'Look, there!' And they'll point to false signs of the second coming, dates of Christ's return, or instances of Christ return, or Jesus showing up in your bedroom, or appearing to you in visions, or whatever.

One commentator says, "this covers," quote, "all premature announcements of the approach of the last day, and it means all predictions of exact dates, all statements as to local," appearance, "appearances are to be mistrusted." We find evidence of false rumors, as early as Paul's letter to the Thessalonians,

remember that. 2 Thessalonians 2:1 to 3, Paul writes there to a troubled church, he says, "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together with him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seemingly to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way."

So, the rumor that Christ had already returned, by the way, this is the error called, even today, called preterism, that Christ returned in some sense in AD 70 in judgment. That clearly contradicts what Jesus teaches. Clearly contradicts what the New Testament teaches on the whole. And these false rumors started very early, just as Jesus predicted, and it created instability, and anxiety, and fear, and worry, in the churches.

So, the first layer, protection, is just simply to identify these false reports. When you hear this kind of language, whether it's appearances of Jesus, or visions of Jesus, or dreams of Jesus, or the Muslims are getting, you know, Justin was up here, Justin Peters talking about, he said, hey, there's

a question you haven't asked me. I said what is it, master? And he said, it is, you need to ask me about the Muslims having visions of Jesus. So, I said, Justin, tell me about these Muslims having visions of Jesus. Remember he talked about that. He said it's, *Skubalon*; it's rubbish.

These false rumors of dates and seeing Jesus and all that stuff. If you hear any of that stuff, you know right away, what it is. You've discerned it. That's the first layer of protection. So, Jesus follows up with a straightforward command and this, *is*, provides a second layer of protection for us. He just gives a straight command, he says, "Don't go out or follow them." It's two verbs, it's two commands, two imperatives, but, really, they kind of combine as one heavy hitting command.

The first, *aperchomai*, can be translated, Do not go after or follow them. Second command is, *dioko, dioko*, and *dioko* is translated in the ESV as, follow, but it really means more like, pursue. So, it's more like, don't pursue them, don't run after them, don't go after them. So, the grammatical force of these commands together, the way the grammar is, the way the tenses

are, it's don't even start to go out, don't even start to go out and follow, don't even start to pursue them or run after them. That is just cut it off before it even happens. He's very clear here and he's very emphatic, strong.

The Bible's abundantly clear about this. It's the false teachers who announce signs of Christ coming, who set dates for the second coming, who see Christ showing up there, or here, or everywhere, or in their mind, or in their dreams, or out in the desert, wherever it is. So that means beloved, if it's false teachers that are purveying this kind of stuff, it is rebellious to dabble in it. It's rebellious to dabble in date setting, to get into sign seeking. It's sinful to flirt with this stuff. Turn it off. Jesus says, don't do that.

Nevertheless, in spite of Christ's clear warning, in spite of his explicit prohibition, I hear Christians still say this all the time. But what's the harm? Oh, I don't take it too seriously for myself, you know, it's just curious. I just find it interesting to watch for signs, and read articles, and watch

videos from prophecy experts, and kind of get into discussions, and kind of stir it up a little bit.

So, what's the harm? Let me answer that. I'm glad you asked. Apart from simple things like squandering valuable time, attention, and energy, which we're stewards of this life, in our time, and attention, and energy, aren't we? So apart from squandering our time, attention, and energy, watching some YouTube so-called expert, getting involved in some Internet chat group, or any of that stuff, you need to understand that, entire cult movements have started in exactly this way, deceiving millions and misrepresenting the truth of our God. Inoculating people from hearing, really, what it is we're trying to say to them, that is not helpful.

One of the most consequential date setting movements in this country started back with William Miller in the first half of the 19th century. William Miller sincerely believed that he could figure out the time of Christ's return, even though Christ said, "No one knows the day or the hour." William Miller said, yeah, but, I, you're not talking about me. Right?

So, he said, it's available to the skillful interpreter, ie. himself, to search the Bible carefully, find the clues, connect the dots by watching the signs of the times. And in 1818, Miller, Miller was convinced that he'd done just that. From the decree of Artaxerxes 457 BC, he counted 2300 years, which he found that number in Daniel 8:14, and he landed on the date of 1843 or maybe it was 1844. He said both, depending on the calendar, differences in a Gregorian versus Jewish dating scheme and all the rest.

So, by 1840, William Miller was something of a celebrity. He'd been publishing his findings, even speaking everywhere, and the public, was stirred into a frenzy, the closer they came to that date of 1843. Pressed for clarity about, Can you get a little more specific? Miller was able to narrow down the date of Christ return as occurring sometime between March 21st of 1843 and March 21st of the following year, 1844.

Well, when both dates came and went, passing without incident, Miller immediately recognized his error, he'd been using the

wrong calendar, so dug up a Karaite Jewish calendar as opposed to the Rabbinic calendar and he redid his math and reset the date for April 18th of 1844. Just about, just a little less than a month away. When that date failed as well, Miller was duly humbled by this point, embarrassed. He was ready to throw in the towel. He said, "I confess my error, I acknowledge my disappointment, and I still believe the day of the Lord is near, even at the door."

He stepped out, but his followers stepped in, and they continued the fight. One of Miller's converts was a man named Samuel Snow. He's in, he was an atheist, skeptic, skeptic. He, he, was converted after reading Miller's lectures, and he had a camp meeting in New Hampshire in August of 1844. Snow kind of reworked the math again and used typology to take a fresh look at Miller's Karaite calendar, Jewish calendar, in a message that he called, *The Seven Month Message* or *The True Midnight Cry* and he set a new date for Christ return October 22nd, 1844.

When that date failed, William Miller and the Millerites were pretty much crushed. Publicly embarrassed, it was known as the

Great Disappointment. This, this is, this rebellious penchant for date setting, it led to spiritual devastation for many, many people. Many gave up on Christianity altogether, became cynical, skeptical, unbelieving. The rankest form of unbelief, because of all this.

Perhaps worse, many disappointed, grieving Millerites, they turned around and didn't give up hope and spawned new movements, but carrying the same paradigm forward. They gathered around false teachers like Charles Taze Russell to form the Jehovah's Witnesses. They followed the teachings of a very strange woman named Ellen G. White. She was a former Millerite, turned false prophetess, and she founded the Seventh-day Adventist movement. That's just one story. But there are many, many of these stories.

The tendency to ignore Christ, here at this point, and flirt with distraction, and fail to keep one's pride, or religious zeal in check, or even ones' curiosity at check. This is the cause of so much confusion and so much spiritual devastation, like so many dandelions. Dandelion seeds blown through the

winds, the seeds will eventually land and they'll take root in new soil, only to grow more weeds and spawn more confusion and on, and on, and on it goes.

Listen, hasn't Jesus helped us here? It's so simple. Verse 23. Whenever we hear reports like this, Look at this, look at that. What about this date? What about this sign? Beloved, we can know immediately that it's false, that we should pay no attention at all. When you consider the track record of these people, Charles Taze Russell and the Watchtower Bible and Tract society, Jehovah's Witnesses, the date of Christ return was 1874. When that failed it was 1914. For Joseph Smith and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the day was 1891. Per Herbert W. Armstrong, The Worldwide Church of God, the date was 1935, oh wait, 1943 oh wait 1972, oh well 1975.

For Hal Lindsey, who joined in with Edgar Whisenant, the date was 1988. Whisenant actually wrote a book, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*, and then the following year, eight, *89 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1989*. I was alive in 88 and 89, not a Christian, but I didn't see anybody disappearing in

the Rapture; going up to heaven and leaving me behind. For Harold Camping, of Family Radio, it was 2011.

The date setting continues today. The sign seeking, the measuring up, headlines of Bible texts, and all the rest, it continues. And we know one thing for certain; whenever we hear a date, whatever that date is, we know for sure that's not the date when Christ will return. Why? Because Jesus said, Matthew 24:36, "Concerning that day and hour, no one knows." No one.

Jesus says here in Luke 17:23, they'll be saying to you. They'll say it earnestly. They'll say it with conviction, "Look, there!", Look, here!" But no one knows. Not even the angels of heaven, nor the son in his humanity, the son of man in his humanity, he too has limitations, like the date of his return, but the father only. So, stop going after them. Stop following them. Don't pursue them at all. Don't listen to them. In fact, don't even start. Christian, will you obey?

Date setting, sign seeking, connecting text with current events, it's rebellious and it is worthless. Why is that?

Because verse 24 says, very clearly when Christ returns. When the kingdom comes, though no one anticipates it, it will be obvious to all. "As the lightning flashes, lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day." There will be no hiding the return of Christ. The event will be known from one end of the heavens to the other, universally recognized and acknowledged.

As the commentator Alfred Plummer says, "None will foresee it and all we'll see it at once, so that no reporting respecting it can have any value." End Quote. All that date setting, sign seeking, headline connection stuff will go right out the window because when Christ does come, all that stuff will be revealed for what it is, total rubbish.

So, folks, don't go down the rabbit hole. Don't chase the theories. Don't listen to the prophecy gurus online. No need to keep watching that live video feed of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall in Jerusalem, cause when it happens you won't miss it. It will be obvious to all.

So, the disciples' expectation. What do we expect? We expect to live in a period of waiting. We wait in hope. We are active and fruitful in are waiting, and we anticipate Christ's return. We're like the good slaves that Christ leaves behind, giving us Minas to invest. We invest them for the sake of the kingdom.

We want a return from the stewardship that Christ has given us. That's our expectation, the disciple's protection. What protects us? Staying clear of anybody who tries to distract us, just obeying Jesus when he tells us, "Don't go after them, don't run after them or follow them."

Number three, number three, last point: The Disciples' Disposition. The disciples' disposition. By disposition, we're talking about having the right attitude, having the proper outlook; having disposition, meaning, mindset. Jesus says in verse 25, "But first he," that is the Son of Man, "First he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."

So much to consider in that short little verse. Maybe I'll get some of that next time, but let me just at least say this,

that's the shortest of Jesus' passion predictions and it's talking about the climax of his first Advent, the passion, the death and burial for sins. And he gives this passion prediction in the middle of teaching about, not his first Advent, but his second Advent. Why?

Connecting Christ's cross with Christ's kingdom, Jesus shows that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 is one and the same person with Daniel's Son of Man. Post resurrection, this idea of suffering and triumph, suffering and glory, joined together in the one person, Jesus Christ. Post resurrection, this is going to shape the mindset and set the, pd, disposition of Christian disciples for ages to come, down to our day.

First, we see in this verse and its placement in this context, that suffering and glory are joined together. Second, we see that suffering precedes glory, suffering first, then glory. And then third, we see that apart from Christ suffering, there is no glory of coming kingdom, not at all. So, suffering and glory joined together. Suffering precedes glory, suffering first and then the glory, and then we see that, apart from the suffering,

no kingdom. So that sets our mindset. That sets the way we think. It frames our disposition. It shapes the character of our lives. It informs and educates all of our gospel preaching.

Notice that Paul did not say in 1 Corinthians 1:23, We preach Christ triumphant. No, but rather "We preach Christ." What? That's right, "Christ crucified." It's a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles. Christ triumphant, now that's a message that makes sense to the world. That's a message that the world can accept and embrace, and wins their approval. That's why the Roman Catholic Church built huge ornate edifices that they call churches. That's why they marched with mighty armies. That's why they exercised great political power.

Luther rightly criticized them in the Heidelberg Catechism, that theirs was a theology of glory and not a theology of the cross. Carl Trueman explains it this way, quote "God revealed himself as" as "merciful to humanity in the incarnation when he manifested himself in human flesh, and the supreme moment of that revelation was on the cross at Calvary. Indeed, Luther sometimes referred enigmatically to Christ crucified as God's

backside, the point at which God appeared to be the very contradiction of all that one might reasonably have anticipated him to be."

Trueman goes on, "The theologians of glory, therefore, are those who build their theology in the light of what they expect God to be like. And surprise, surprise, they made God to look something like themselves. The theologians of the cross, however, are those who build their theology in the light of God's own revelation of himself in Christ, hanging on the cross." End Quote.

Just get this down as a summary of this; don't be a theologian of glory, be a theologian of the cross. That revelation of God, in the incarnation of Christ, at the climax of his ministry, verse 25 "First he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." That "word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God." There's no kingdom without it. There's no triumph without that suffering.

Jesus intends to set expectations for his disciples to guard them perpetually against this perennial error of triumphalism. We see this error of triumphalism at work today in a muscular version of theonomy, and dominionism, and hypermasculinity, all that is a caricature of true humanity.

It's a post-feminist reaction to all this toxic masculinity stuff. It's, I mean, all that stuff is abhorrent. We get it. So much of this is hermeneutically inconsistent. It's exegetically unsound. It's theologically unmoored. And listen, it is sailing to yet another shipwreck in the opposite ditch of that premillennial caricature, because it's just another theology of glory.

It's just a bunch of young men who want to be thought of as tough and want their theology to be masculine and muscular, not bending from the government and all that stuff. We're not put on this Earth, Jesus said, Listen, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would get up and fight."

But as it is, it's not of this world, we're theologians of the cross. We've reached the humility of Christ. We've reached the crucifixion of Christ. Why? Because right now, during this time of waiting, you know what Christ is doing, he's populating his kingdom with citizens, who are saved by the grace of his cross. Let's preach that.

Pattern set by our Lord, suffering proceeds glory. This sets a pattern for how we live our lives too. In Hebrews 12:1 to 3, the writer calls us to look back to Chapter 11, the Great Hall of Faith. Look at that great cloud of witnesses, many of whom learned to endure suffering while awaiting God's fulfillment of restoration promises. They saw from a great prophetic distance, so to speak, the fulfillment of those promises.

They saw from a great prophetic distance the king of the kingdom that they serve, and the writer says that, as they did that, we need to do that. "Let us also," the writer says, "lay aside every weight. And the sin that clings so easily and closely and let us run with endurance the race that's set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and the perfecter of our

faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame." You know where he is? Seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Suffering to glory.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint hearted, because, beloved, if we follow Christ and we preach his gospel, we too are going to endure from sinners' hostility against ourselves.

If you're not enduring any hostility at all. If life is pretty easy for you and you get, yeah, really bumping like a pinball in a pinball machine off of different people's criticisms and objections, and Oh you're critical, Oh, you're this, Oh, you're that; your real problem maybe a need to take a good hard look in the mirror and see; are you being clear as a Christian.

May the Lord grant us, Grace Church, may the Lord grant us a great clarity of understanding together. May he bring us to unity in the truth. The world of one mind and one heart together, for the sake of the gospel. May he keep us steadfast,

immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor in the Lord is never in vain. May we do that with our eyes fixed on the hope of the second coming. Amen?

Let's pray. Our father, thank you so much for sending the Lord Jesus Christ. He's our Savior and our Lord. He is the suffering servant, and he is the triumphant Son of Man. And we await for the full manifestation of his glory in the second coming. We are like those who long for one of the days of the Son of Man. We just, we just wanna see him triumphant, walking this earth.

We want to see nations bowing before him. Kings and officials, governments, and people alike, bringing their, their, gifts before him, bringing their tribute. Bow at his feet and proclaim him King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That is what he is. That's what we want him to be recognized as. We want to see the full vindication of your truth, and your righteousness, and your faithfulness, our God. And we know that that comes in the person, in the triumph, and the second coming of Jesus Christ.



Let us be good servants of yours as we wait. Let us not be lazy. Let us not be chasing distraction, and let us not fall into a different era, an era of triumphalism and political action and all the stuff trying to, trying to, wrench out of this world some modicum of bowing the knee, when the hearts are standing up on the inside and defiant.

Father, let us instead, be proclaimers of the message of the cross, that is foolish to those who are perishing. But to those who were being saved, it is the very power and wisdom of God. Thank you, father, for our opportunity to, to, hear the word today, to listen and learn from Jesus, our Savior. It's in his name we pray. Amen.