

Ready When Christ Returns

Luke 17:26-30

October 16, 2022

Turn to Luke 17 in your Bibles as we continue in our expositional study of the Gospel of Luke. We've had two sermons so far in this text and covering verses 20-25, two sermons on that, and as we begin, we will read those verses again just to remind ourselves of what we have already covered.

Luke 17:20 says this, "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he," Jesus, "answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, "Look here he is, or there," for behold, the kingdom of God 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. 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.'"

As always, when we walk through the text of Scripture, we are applying, endeavoring to imply, to apply the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. It's just a big way of saying that we want to follow the rules of grammar when we walk through the text, and we want to consider very carefully the facts of history.

And all of that is to get the author's intent, to understand the human author's intent and the Spirit's intent in the text in order that we might understand the true meaning of the text. If you don't have the true meaning of the text, you don't have the text. So that's what we're doing with exegesis, and every good sermon ought to be driven by that same commitment to the grammatical-historical hermeneutic.

We started in Luke 17:20 by considering the historical side of that hermeneutic, considering the historical perspective, so

we could understand the common, shared perspective that Jesus and the Jews of his nation, that they had about the kingdom of God. We learned that the kingdom of God as a concept started not here or recently to their time frame, but way back in Genesis chapter 1. In Genesis 1:26-28, it was the dominion mandate that God gave to Adam as the federal head of humanity. That's where the kingdom begins. That's where the concept of the kingdom starts, is Genesis 1:26, the dominion mandate.

God gave that to Adam, and Adam failed in his role, failed in his mediatorial role as the ruler over that realm, over the whole earth. Adam failed to exercise a proper rulership in that dominion, a rulership that would be, was to be conducted by simple faith in perfect obedience to God's word and God's law.

So the mediatorial exercise of dominion failed in Adam. He was represented in Israel's history, but failed time and again. And it has waited for the last Adam, Jesus Christ, to the Son of David, Israel's Messiah. It's waited to be fulfilled in him.

"Jesus came into the world," John 1:10, "and though the world was made through him, the world did not know him. Jesus came to his own people," verse 11 says, "and his own people," the Jews, they "did not receive them." When the king came to announce the arrival of the kingdom of God to his own people, the evil generation of Jews that he came to, they refused their king. They rejected him, eventually crucified him, and in doing so they rejected the kingdom of God as well.

Soon, Jesus is going, is going to say to the chief priests and the elders, and soon in chronology from our text, soon he's going to say to the chief priests, the elders of the people, in Matthew 21:42, they come to question his authority in Jerusalem, and he says to them, "Have you never read the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?" Haven't you read that? "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits."

Who are those people? Who are those people? Who are the people producing the fruits of the kingdom of God? Well, back to John's prologue, John 1:12-13, "to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but born of God." Those are the people that produce the fruits of the kingdom. Those who are born again, or better, born from above, born from God. They, and they alone are citizens of the kingdom of God.

Doesn't matter where you're born, to whom you're born, what people you're born into. Doesn't matter what your culture is. Doesn't matter how many times you and your family went to church. Doesn't matter how much you contributed to the church and how much you've built that church that's in your town, and you and your family have bricks written with your name on it in the church. Doesn't matter.

The citizens of the kingdom of God are those who are born again, and those who are born again manifest that by producing certain fruits. These Pharisees that we just read about, the

ones asking about when the kingdom of God would come, Luke 17:20, they're not born again. They are in the condition of Nicodemus when he first came to Jesus in John chapter 3. They are not born again, and they can therefore not see the king standing before them. They're not citizens of the kingdom because they don't see the king. They don't bow before the King. They don't see the signs of the kingdom. They're not born again. That's the issue.

Since the Pharisees failed to see the true signs of the kingdom, by the way which were replete in Jesus' ministry, kingdom has been taken from them. No unbelieving, Christ-rejecting sinner will see any further sign. When the kingdom finally does come, they will see no signs when it comes. Jesus said, "The kingdom will come instead, for you, suddenly," without any warning, not subject to human observation. And when the kingdom of God comes, it will arrive suddenly, so there's no time to observe it. It'll arrive supernaturally, not naturally, so it's unpredictable.

The kingdom is going to come defying naturalistic, scientific observation. When the kingdom comes, it'll come defying any historical, social, political predictability. That is, you can't read the headlines and figure it out. As a sudden, supernatural event, it is an unpredictable event. When the kingdom of God comes, when the Son of Man comes in his day, the king and his kingdom will take the world at that time by complete and total surprise.

Turning to his disciples in verse 22, Jesus wants to set expectations for them. He tells them that they themselves, these disciples, will not see even one of the days of the Son of Man, even though they desperately long to. There are going to be plenty of false signs to tempt them, to turn them away after false messiahs, but they must not go after them. They must not follow.

Jesus will not come, verse 23, privately or provincially, but rather he will come, verse 24, in a way that is universally recognized and seen and known, like lightning that flashes across the sky. They need to realize that following Jesus as

disciples, verse 25, they need to realize suffering precedes glory. There's a cross before the crown. So he wants them, he wants us, to be very wary of any theology of triumphalism that teaches us otherwise, that influences us otherwise.

As we turn to verse 26, which is what we're going to get into today, Jesus tells his disciples about the condition of the human race when the Son of Man returns to earth. This is what the world will look like when the Son of Man comes again. When Jesus comes again, people will be living life as usual, and usual in a fallen world is a fallen usual. The status quo isn't a high bar of righteousness at the time when the Son of Man returns.

You can see that when you look at verse 26. I'm going to read the whole section here to the end, verse 26 to the end even though we'll only cover verses 26-30 for today. Jesus tells them, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

“Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot- they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all- so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife.

“Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together. And one will be taken and the other left.’ And they said to him,” verse 37, “Where Lord?’ He said to them, ‘Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.’”

Some of your Bibles may have a verse 36 in it. You probably see that. You notice that there is no verse 36 in the ESV. But in the King James Version it says, “Two men shall be in the

field, the one shall be taken and the other left.'" That's verse 36 in the King James Version. The NAS includes that verse, but it italicizes it. The CSB, as well, includes that verse, but puts it in brackets, and that's to let the readers know that the verse is not in the earliest manuscripts, manuscripts that were unavailable to the King James Version translators, but the ESV, along with my Greek texts, they don't even include the verse at all, not even in italics or in brackets.

The verse itself, "'Two men left in the field, one taken, the other left,'" that comes from Matthew 24:40, the Olivet Discourse. We're going to get to the Olivet Discourse a little bit later in Luke's Gospel, Chapter 21, but that's inserted into this text because it seems to go with the flow there.

Matthew 24:40 probably got into Luke 17:36 because possibly a scribe made a marginal note, marking his personal cross-reference to Matthew, seeing a correlation, inadvertently, that made it into a manuscript copy which happened from time to time. So this is a copying error; it's nothing more.

But incidentally, while we're talking about Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, that verse comes from a section which starts in Matthew 24:36 which says this, "'But concerning that day and hour, no one knows. Not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, but the Father only.'" After that, we read what Jesus says about the days of Noah, similar to our text in Matthew 24, and that's followed by warnings to stay awake and be alert, again very similar to our text and yet a bit different in that context.

Then this warning in verse 42 of Matthew 24. "'Stay awake,'" Jesus says. "'Stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.'" "'Stay awake.'" The final verse in that section, Matthew 24, verse 44 says, "'Therefore you also must be ready,'" and then the same explanation, "'for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'"

It's one of the chief applications coming out of the Olivet Discourse, as well as this section in Luke. It's also one of the main applications of eschatology itself. Jesus provided, we have to say, in the New Testament a lot of content on the end times. A lot of content about eschatology starts with these sections in

the Synoptic Gospels, the revelation of end times that we read in the Epistles. You can see in, all kinds of, Romans 9 through 11, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, 2 Thessalonians, the whole thing, Hebrews 12, 2 Peter 3, the entirety of Revelation.

Jesus did not give all of that content and more with this warning, "Concerning the date and hour, no one knows," he didn't give all that so that we would set dates, so that we'd watch for the signs. No one knows the hour. He doesn't want us to read headlines and dive into Internet rabbit holes, never to be seen or heard from again. Not in our right minds, anyway. He doesn't want us to chase false dates and false messiahs and false rumors. He wants us to stay steady at the work that he has assigned us to do, and that is obedient waiting. He wants us to wait and be ready.

He provided so much content about the end times, about the last days, which Paul described to Timothy as being "times of difficulty," so that while we're waiting, we don't become discouraged or faint-hearted. So that while we're waiting, we

don't become lazy or slack. So that while we're waiting, we don't drift into sin and distraction. So that while we're waiting, we don't become fearful or anxious.

Instead, by remaining watchful and hopeful, he gives us all this content about the end, so that we will learn to serve him in love, to see that he cares for us, to see that he's watching over us, to see that he protects us. We keep on believing, and we keep on obeying. Faith and obedience means we will be ready to receive him when he comes again.

“Be ready,” he says, “for the Son of Man is coming in an hour you don't expect.” We've already seen a parable about that in Luke 14. Be ready, because that master is going to come, and he's, blessed is that slave who is busy doing the things that a slave is assigned to do, when the master comes unexpectedly.

Someone will say, But wait a minute, isn't Jesus talking here about the Second Coming? Yes he is. So someone will say, Don't you believe that the rapture of the church happens seven

years before this, before the Second Coming? Doesn't that undermine the "coming in an hour you don't expect" factor, here?

Uh, no, it does not. And you say, wait a minute, rapture comes, seven-year clock is ticking before the Second Coming. Can't you mark your calendar? Six years of self-centeredness and indulgence and living however you want to and then clean up in the seventh year.

In the amillennial and postmillennial systems of eschatology, the Second Coming is preceded by the release of Satan from the Abyss. The Abyss is a picture for them. It's a picture of Satan being bound, unable to deceive the nations. And in those systems, Satan's release enables him to go out and deceive and gather the unbelieving nations. In the amillennial system, it enables him to overturn the great gains of the gospel. Postmillennial system, to deceive, gather the nations, come to Armageddon.

In the amillennial system, deceiving the nations, gathering nations, coming to Armageddon, that final battle, Gog, Magog. In

the postmillennial system, it overturns the gains of the gospel, turning that apostasy, turning it into a rebellion, again Armageddon, the final Gog-Magog rebellion. So both the amillennial and postmillennial systems see Satan deceiving the nations, Satan coming against Christ.

Since all three eschatological systems grant Satan such significant power to deceive the nations, why would we think that the rapture of the church, according to the premillennial system, why would the rapture stop Satan from deceiving the nations at that time as well? In fact, I mean, I've got great confidence in what I'm seeing, that the fallen human heart will believe pretty much anything. I've been watching it as I scan the news headlines, and I think you see that, too.

When Satan cranks up his deception, do you think they'll be able to stand firm? In fact, Satan is going to use the rapture to his advantage by being the interpreter of this rapture event to the unbelieving world. What explained the sudden disappearance of so many people all at once? What happened? Aliens, right? So we're seeing that all the time. Aliens. Or

suicide cult, worldwide suicide cult. Or right-wing radicals refuse a vaccine, they disappear into remote areas and form militias so they can come back and attack all the progressives. That's been spun around, too. Or, since they failed to get the vaccine, perhaps they just spontaneously combusted. Should have gotten the vaccine.

Look, we see this all the time. People will believe anything. The fallen heart, the unbelieving heart, is susceptible to any deception, any error. They're under the prince of the power of the air, and at the end, when Satan ratchets up the deception and goes after them, you think they're going to be able to stand firm?

Unrestrained power of Satan to deceive, not even the rapture itself is going to awaken the majority. In fact, he'll use an event like the rapture, a crisis, never waste a crisis, to win people over, consolidate power, take over. Everyone is going to march to the tune of the beast. They will quickly move on from the chaos caused by the rapture and follow his lead. So yes, they will be this unready and this unprepared when the Lord

returns to earth for judgment even seven years after the rapture event.

So to prepare his people to be ready, no matter if it's the rapture, no matter if it's the Second Coming of the, for when the Jew, the nation of Israel is going to be there and return to the Messiah and repent, they're going to look upon him whom they pierced, and mourn. They'll come in a national repentance, coming to Christ. No matter when it is, whether it's now, waiting for the rapture, or whether it's then, waiting for the Second Coming, Jesus is preparing, here, his people to be ready. Be ready. You don't know when it's going to come. Be ready. So he reminds us, he gives us two illustrations from history, and he reminds us about people who likewise in the past were unprepared for divine judgment.

Okay, so we're going to look at verses 26-30, simple outline. Here's the first point, point number one: When the flood came, people were not ready. When the flood came, people were not ready. Verse 26, "'Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.'"

That expression, days of Noah, it's a plural expression, days, also days of Lot, plural expressions, and refers to the activity that characterized those times. And then those, those days, what characterized those times, that's compared to what will characterize the time of, here's a singular expression, "the day of the Son of Man when he returns.'" So we'll come back to the comparatives and a subsequent point, here in our outline.

But first, for now, let's see what characterizes these days, the days of Noah, starting in verse 27, "the days of Noah." "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.'" It says, "They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.'"

The grammar Jesus uses here, it's fascinating. He puts those first four verbs in verse 27 in the imperfect tense, and in imperfect tense in the Greek language portrays a

continuousness of ongoing activity happening in the past. So instead of, they ate, that's aorist tense, past, just kind of looking at the action as a whole, they ate the meal, it's in the imperfect tense, they were eating the meal. See the difference? So this is an ongoing action in the past, and there's four verbs in the imperfect tense.

Also, in the grammar here, Jesus doesn't separate each of these verbs with a coordinating conjunction, so, conjunction, the word, and. Jesus puts all those verbs in there, but he doesn't separate them with a conjunction, the word, and. The ESV conveys it, adding the, and. "They were eating and drinking and marrying," and that's kind of what we expect in English. We don't like just commas, we like to put the, and, in.

Jesus drops the, and, it's a device called asyndeton and it sounds more like this: They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they bring, were, being given in marriage.

He goes beyond merely identifying the activity, and Jesus wants to convey the pattern of life, the feel of life during those times. He wants, in the way he describes this, us to hear the regularity, the monotony, the rhythmic repetition of everyday life. "They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they're being given in marriage," and it just goes on and on and on and on.

People of Noah's day are portrayed, here, as being occupied with taking care of, first, physical needs, eating and drinking, and then the enjoyment of their sensual pleasures, so it's the taste of food and drink; it's the effect of food, the pleasing of the palette and the saving of the soul; it's the effect of the drink, like wine which gladdens the heart.

Beyond physical and sensual pleasures, the people of Noah's day were also preoccupied with the social and relational aspects of life, those things that revolve around marriage and romance and creating families and building families and enjoying families and all the family gatherings and everything. Your

calendars are all marked with birthdays and quinceaneras and all the different things that happen in life.

The verb, marrying, in the active voice, refers to a male's role, being given in marriage; passive voice, so female's role. So a male and female both caught up in this, on and on pattern of life. The female's role, passive voice, being given in marriage, alludes to the involvement of the entire family in giving away the bride. As we understand weddings, everything leading up to weddings, everything leading up to wedding showers and all the rest, that just involves a lot of planning, a lot of thinking, a lot of giving, a lot of just rejoicing. Social functions like weddings bring families together, involve the community. That causes a celebration, so more food, more drink, more enjoyment. Any of this wrong, by the way? Any of it wrong, sinful? Any of it's, any of this inherently sinful, to eat, drink, marry, be given in marriage. Any of this sinful?

Isn't it interesting that Jesus highlights none of the sins of Noah's day. And were there any? Isn't that the reason the flood came, right? Back in Genesis chapter 6, so you can go

there if you're fast enough, but Genesis chapter 6, it's documented early in Genesis 6:1-5, all this is resulting in the flood judgment. Genesis 6:5 says that "the Lord saw the wickedness of man was great in the Earth, and that every," listen to this, "every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Wow! I mean, I've had some, even as an unbeliever, I've had some bad, bad days of sinning, but every thought, every intention, only evil continually? Not one good thought? Look down, if you're in Genesis 6, to verse 11. "Now, the earth was corrupt in God's sight. And the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'"

But our Lord doesn't even mention the more notorious sins of Noah's day. In fact, no real sin, per se, in eating, drinking and being married. All those things are to be enjoyed in the

Lord when received with thanksgiving, right? However, we need to realize that when that's all your life consists of, or when that's the primary preoccupation of your life, even when you dabble in and sprinkle in a little bit of religion, weekly religion even, service in the church, even; if that's what your life consists of, if that's what the thoughts and intentions of your heart are all about, is preoccupied with physical things and social things and family things, you may be in danger of being one of whom, Paul said in Philippians 3:19, "Their end is destruction, their God is their belly, with minds set on earthly things."

When your God is your belly, ironically, that which you consume, consumes you. Marriage, too, it's a good gift from God, but when marriage, when family, when birthdays and family gatherings, when socializing and celebrating take first place in your life, when they are the priority, and everything else in your life needs to be shuffled around that; look, that can turn into a subtle idolatry, not turn into, it may be a form of subtle idolatry that you need to identify and see as oh, so dangerous. John ended his first epistle saying, "Beloved, keep yourself from idols." Last word in his epistle, to Christians.

Well, going back to Luke 17, the imperfect tenses, the effect of the asyndeton, like the rhythmic sound of a train going down the tracks, clickety clack, clickety clack, clickety clack, clickety clack, just lulling you to sleep. But then, with the sudden and explosive force of a missile hitting the train, killing everyone, Jesus jars us awake in the middle of verse 27 with a series of aorist tense verbs to remind us all of a past judgment day. "They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the Ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

It's sharp, it's strong, it's concise, it's succinct, it grabs your attention. Joel Green, the commentator, says, "The rhythmic repetition of the activities of everyday life are suddenly interrupted by something quite exceptional and cataclysmic. God's judgment breaks inescapably, surprisingly, abruptly into the mundane of life." End Quote.

They were eating, drinking, marrying, and all the while, all the while, like a sword of Damocles hanging above their heads, there was judgment waiting. It's like that picture of Jonathan Edwards, he paints in the *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, repulsive spider at the end of a very thin web, a thread hanging over a fire.

They're completely preocc, they're oblivious to this, oblivious to the danger. They're, they're completely preoccupied with their everyday routines. Business as usual. Even though Noah, even though he's there, the preacher of righteousness, even though he and his sons, they've been next door, and what are they doing next door? Building this massive structure.

Any of you see the ark out in Kentucky area? Amazing. Walk up and see this boat. A hundred and twenty years they're next door, hammering and sawing and nailing and doing everything that they're, building this ark, and no one paid attention. Text doesn't tell us; not, not too hard to imagine this, though, people taking notice of Noah's Ark project in year one, year two, and so on. In the early years, perhaps, we'd guess, people

paid some amount of attention. Curiosity had to bring some onlookers around, some inquisitors.

But as the years stretched into decades, no doubt Noah's little carpentry project turned into a complete and running joke. People returned to their own complacency, returned back to the rhythmic repetition of daily life, enjoying their pleasures, enjoying their comforts, rejoicing in life, liberty, the pursuit of their own happiness. Seemed to have escaped their notice when God brought the animals to Noah's ark in pairs. Seemed to, they seemed to ignore Noah and his family while they were packing the ark with all their belongings and then disappearing inside, never to be seen again.

After God shut the door on the ark, "on that day," Genesis 7:11, "on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth." Geological destruction on a scale we've never seen. The map and the terrain shows it. We go out and see geological formations here on our Front Range in Colorado, and we can see the flood geology of a plates of, of sediment stacked up and then shoved up and turned into red rocks. So we turn and make an

amphitheater out of it. We enjoy music there, and we fail to realize we're sitting in judgment.

I tell people that all the time. I love driving around and seeing the beauty. I love the beauty of our, of our country. Absolutely love it. I'm so thankful for this country, how God's blessed it, for the national parks that he's given. But you know what makes those national parks, Yellowstone, Bryce Canyon, Grand Canyon, you know what makes them so spectacular? Judgment. We think this is beautiful, and it's a cursed, judged earth. We have no imagination to understand what the original design looked like. If we think this is beautiful, imagine what the first looked like. Imagine what it's going to look like when there's a new heavens and a new earth.

Fountains of the great deep burst forth, tearing tectonic plates out of their way as the water shot up, just breaking the canopy above. And then the water, the windows of the heavens, it says in Genesis 7:11, they opened, the rain fell, the flood continued for 40 days, 40 nights. It drowned the entire earth in water.

Says in verse 23 that God blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was left and those who were with him in the ark.

Our friends over at Answers in Genesis estimate the earth's population in Noah's day could have been 750 million people at the low end. 750 million people. Considering the extremely long lifespans of the people who lived at that time, think Methuselah 969 years, Noah 950, the population may have been way beyond that, maybe closer to four billion people on the earth. It's quite a ratio, isn't it? Saved to lost.

Jesus summarizes this episode very succinctly in verse 27, the flood came, *kataklysmos*, the cataclysm came and *apollymi pantas*, the cataclysm destroyed them all. When the flood came, the people were not ready.

Now let's look at example number two, starting in verse 28. And here's number two. Same kind of pattern. When the fire fell, people were not ready. When the fire fell, people were not ready. Verse 28, "Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building."

Same pattern here as in the previous verse. Imperfect verb tenses, asyndeton, but Jesus adds some other activities of daily life, and you can see that in verse 28 they're paired up, eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, billing, building. There they correlate to one another. So to the physical necessities and the sensual pleasures of life, to the social and relational aspects of life, the joys of marriage, the joys of family, Jesus goes on to add the commercial aspects of life, like buying and selling, building a business, making a profit, the buzz of the marketplace, the intoxicating feel, feeling of the sale, the joy of inventing, the joy of developing, the joy of marketing, the joy of producing, all that is included in buying and selling, buying and selling.

Then planting and building, planting and building, what's that about? That's about progress. Progress. It's forward-looking. It's investment-oriented. Assuming a reliable and stable future, what's planted will be harvested, processed, consumed, and sold in the market, assuming everything will always be the same, nothing will ever, ever change. Real estate will never be a bad investment. Buy up all the land you can, and when you buy your land, improve your land, make it useful, make it productive, improve the property with buildings and barns and structures.

Again, any of these activities, are they inherently sinful? Didn't God create a world in which all these things are aspects of exercising dominion, subduing the earth? Isn't that what our, Science and Circus Conference drew out is? Did Jeff Williams make a very powerful and eloquent case for science being driven by the dominion mandate? Absolutely.

So what's the problem? Again, the problem is that living life in a fallen world, having inherited, as we have, a sin nature, as we deal with sin in the flesh, listen, even the good

things that God gives us can become idolatrous distractions for us. Even the good things, the institutions of marriage itself, can be, become a cause or a means of turning our hearts away from God.

Jesus has a very short verse, verse 32, "Remember Lot's wife." We could also say, go into, to the book of Job. Remember Job's wife? Sometimes a marriage or your marriage partner can be a means, I'm not trying to, I'm not trying to ruin any marriages, here, not trying to cause you to look suspiciously at the your marriage partner. I'm just saying. Sometimes marriage, family, these things can be a cause of distraction, can be a vulnerability for us in turning our hearts away from God.

And that happened, listen, that happened in Sodom and Gomorrah. There were two other cities of the plain mentioned in Deuteronomy; Admah, Zeboiim. Notice once again, as Jesus is talking about Sodom, there's no mention of Sodom's more renowned, infamous list of sins. But we know, don't we, according to Genesis 19:4-5, that when the angels came to Sodom and they were sitting in the square, and Lot said, "No, I'm

going to take you out of the public square and bring you into my home for hospitality and safety and care."

Before Lot and the angel visitors lay down that night, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man surrounded the house, and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." This outbreak of widespread perversion reveals the end of an all-too-familiar descent into sexual sin. Sodom's devolution into homosexual sin followed the same path outlined in Romans 1:18-32, which is, by the way, the very same path that our country has been following for decades. We're now celebrating it.

The sodomites had been engaged for many years in the good things God had given them, but they became preoccupied with them. They became distracted by them, consumed by them, such that, as one put it, "the urgency of faith was replaced with laxity."

It was not too many years earlier that God had shown great, great favor to Sodom. You can see this back in Genesis 14, Genesis 14, and we read about this, you turn there, if you like, to Genesis 14 verse 17, and we read there about this epic battle, took place before the judgment on Sodom, epic battle, four kings against five. The kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, we find out they were defeated in that battle, and the enemy, the, the conquering enemy plundered all their possessions, plundered their cities, and Lot was taken as a captive.

Who's Lot? Lot is the nephew of Abram. Oh, so that's a big, big mistake. You just woke up the beast. You just woke up the giant. So Abram strapped on his sword, he armed his 318 men for battle, and they pursued the enemy. Abram and his company caught up with them, slaughtered them, and brought everything back. So they snatched, these people snatched defeat right out of the jaws of victory, didn't they? Taking Lot, big mistake.

But that's when, according to Genesis 14:17 and following, the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram and, get this, another king came out as well. Look at verse 17, Genesis 14. "After his

return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh, that is the King's Valley and Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High.

"And he," Melchizedek, "blessed him, and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who's delivered your enemies into your hand.' And Abram gave him a tenth of everything," thus setting the pattern, by the way, for the tithe in Israel's economy, the Aaronic tithe.

Nevertheless, verse 21, "The king of Sodom said to Abram, 'Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself.' Abram said to the king of Sodom, 'I've lifted my hand to the Lord, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap, or anything that is yours, lest you should say, "I have made Abraham rich." So I'll take nothing but what the young men have eaten, share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, Mamre take their share.'" And on it goes.

The king of Sodom, here, he's not only been rescued, not only has he had all his goods restored, he's introduced to this remarkable king, the king of Salem. What's that? That's Jerusalem. Melchizedek, he's a type of Christ. The writer to the Hebrews makes this connection plain because he uses him to illustrate the superlatively greater priesthood of Christ after the pattern of Melchizedek.

It says in Hebrews 7:1-2, "For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, King of Righteousness, and then he is also King of Salem, that is, King of Peace."

God showed remarkable mercy to the king of Sodom, remarkable mercy to the city of Sodom. Not only that, but he allowed the king of Sodom to meet Abram, the father of faith, the one through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. King of Sodom met Melchizedek, the king who represents

the gospel itself, how God's righteousness and how God's peace can come together. Most profound mystery of human life: How can God be just, maintain his holiness, and still receive sinners to himself?

Here's a hint in Melchizedek, this king of Sodom learned about God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, incredible spiritual privilege, to embrace by faith, to bring back to his people, and what did the king of Sodom do? What did the people of Sodom do? Having experienced divine rescue, having received this remarkable spiritual privilege, they returned to the marketplace. They went back to work. Went back to their fields, back to their real estate, back to their buildings, back to their business enterprises, back to business as usual.

So we read in Ezekiel 16:49, "Behold, this was the guilt of Sodom. She and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." All the blessings that God gave them resulted in no change in their hearts at all. This self-indulgence of excess, the self-centeredness and pride, the love of ease and comfort, it turned

their hearts cold to the poor and needy, and it only descends from there into the vilest of immorality. Again I point to you example Z, our country. Our country has experienced the same descent from the great gifts of God into the vilest of immorality.

Again, I want to make this abundantly clear, here. We notice, go back to Luke 17, we notice that Jesus didn't not draw our attention to Sodom sins. I have done that in the exposition of this text, but he did not. Jesus puts all the focus on Sodom's preoccupation with the matters of daily life.

Why did he do that? Because for a Jewish audience standing before him, one so heavenly influenced by pharisaism, by highlighting Sodom sins to them, by focusing on Sodom's rap sheet, gives these Jews an easy out. It gives us evangelicals and easy out, undercutting the power of Jesus' warning. They could easily say, Well, we're not bad as, as bad as those people. We're safe from judgment. We're good folks, hard workers, family men, family women.

Look, we're no different, are we? That's why Jesus is posing this warning to his disciples. Let's entertain no false sense that we'll escape judgment if we fail to heed the judgment warnings, if we continue on with life as usual. What'll it be to us? That is the surest way to die, swept up in the fierce severity and swiftness of divine judgment.

Look at verse 29. Same pattern here, "On the day when Lot went out from Sodom." It was on that day, at the warning and the insistence of the angels, Genesis 19:14 says, "Lot went out, said to his sons in law, who are to marry his daughters, 'Hey, get up, get out of this place, for the Lord's about to destroy the city.'" But he seemed to his son-in-laws to be jesting. Ah, that Lot. He's always, always going on and on again about the end times. Ahh, just let the old crank go, you know, we're gonna, we got a party to go to. I don't know why I'm using that voice.

But they don't listen to Lot's urging. Only four people, four people, made it out of Sodom that day, Lot and his wife and his two daughters. "'On that day,'" Jesus says, "'fire and

sulfur rained from heaven.'" This is a rain that when it came, no one got wet. This rain, the rain from the sky, sulfurous fire, not water. Again, *apollymi*, it destroyed them all with the swiftness and the ferocity and, and the devastation of a thermonuclear blast. God incinerated Sodom. Its entire population except for four souls, all gone, and that land is now covered over by the Dead Sea. Fitting.

The only use of those cities is to provide a perpetual example, according to Jude, Jude 7, "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, they likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, and serves as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire."

So Jesus uses these two illustrations: days of Noah, days of Lot. And he draws a point of comparison of what it'll be like when he comes again. So third point for your outline: When Christ returns, people will not be ready. When Christ returns, number three, people will not be ready.

Verse 26, "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be," more literally, "thus it will also be in the days of the Son of Man." You got, just as; you got, thus also. This grammar and wording indicate a very strong correlation in the comparison, here. Jesus is trying to say, listen, this is exactly parallel. It's exactly similar.

The vast majority of people on the earth at that time, they will all be caught up in this rhythmic repetition of daily life, routine life. We can add from Genesis 6:5 that their thought life is wicked. It's only evil continually. They're indifferent to Noah's preaching. They're indifferent to his example of faith in building. Peter highlights the ratio of wickedness to righteousness in Noah's day: millions, even billions destroyed. But 1 Peter 3:20, "only a few of them were saved," right? That is, eight persons were brought safely through water.

Same thing will happen again when Christ returns. People will be indifferent to Godly preaching, they will be indifferent to Godly example, they'll be indifferent to the warnings of God's word, and they'll turn to us, scoffing. 2 Peter chapter

3:2-6, Peter says, "You should remember the predictions of the holy prophets," you should remember their predictions, "and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Knowing this, first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires, and they will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'" They're uniformitarians. No change, everything is the same. Don't worry. Verse 5, "For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these, the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished."

Again, Luke 17:28, "Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot," and then verse 30, the apodosis, the thought is completed, "so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

Again, the ESV, too mild here. It's a very strong, insistent prepositional phrase, According to the *same* it will be, Jesus says. Corresponding to the same thing. Lot's time, our time; Lot's time, my time. "So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

Again, the ratio of wicked to righteous in Lot's day, we don't know the populations of the cities of the plain, but four great cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, with populations of many thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands. All died, only four saved. "As in the days of Noah," "as in the days of Lot." It will be exactly similar when the Son of Man comes, when he's revealed.

None other than venerable J. C. Ryle wrote this, he said, "It's hard to imagine a passage of Scripture which more completely overthrows the common ideas which prevail among men about Christ's return. The world will not be converted when Jesus comes again. The earth will not be full of the knowledge of the Lord. The reign of peace will not have been established. The Millennium will not have begun."

He's talking, there, directly to the postmillennial position. I'll explain more about that tonight, but he goes on to say this, "These glorious things will come to pass after the Second Advent, but not before. If words mean anything, these

verses show us that the earth will be found to be full of wickedness in the day of Christ's appearing. The unbelievers and the unconverted will be numerous. The believers and the Godly, as in the days of Noah and Lot, will be found to be very few." End quote.

Look, it's the same picture given by the entire New Testament. It's the same picture from the Old Testament prophets as well. Same thing. Paul said to Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:1, "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty." Don't we know it? But more is to come. "People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, and wholly heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness but denying its power."

We're to avoid such people, but listen, down in verse 13 he goes on and says, "Evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse. They'll be deceiving and being deceived." Wow, Paul is

such a pessimist, isn't he? Where'd he get that kind of an attitude? From Jesus. We're in the Olivet Discourse, which we're going to come to in due course.

Look, let me add one more, one more point. When the flood came, people were not ready. When the fire fell, people were not ready. When Christ returns, people will not be ready then, either. But what about you? What about now? So fourthly, number four, before Christ returns, people can still get ready. There's hope here. The fact that we're reading this and not being consumed by fire says there's hope here.

Before Christ returns, people can still get ready, and there's two points I want to draw your attention to, one in verse 27 and another in verse 29. The judgment did not come in Noah's day until when? Until the day when Noah entered the ark, and then the flood came. God waited until Noah was safely tucked away in the ark. I mean, 120 years went by. I mean, God didn't come at year 119, just before he puts the sealant on the boat, and says, "All right, get in!" No, his judgment was patient. It

waited until he could tuck Noah and his family, his people, safely in the boat.

Same thing, judgment didn't come in Lot's day until when? On the day when Lot went out from Sodom. Verse 29, "And then the fire and sulfur rained down from heaven." In fact, the angel told Lot on the day of judgment, on that very day, "Escape to Zoar quickly." That's a small little city. "Escape to that city quickly," and the angel tells him, "for I can do nothing until you arrive there." I'm not allowed to touch this place until you're out of here, and there safely.

God waited for Noah. God waited until Lot safely arrived in Zoar. Listen, God withholds his judgment. He makes sure all his people are safe and sound before letting loose with his judgment. Again, listen to Peter picking up where we left off in verse 7. "By the same word." What word is that? It's the word that drowned the world with water. "By the same word, the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord

one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promises as some count slowness, but he is patient toward you."

Who's the, you? You believers. You Christians, to whom I'm writing this book. He's patient toward you, not wishing that any of you should perish, but that all should reach repentance, that all should reach Zoar, that all should enter into the ark of safety. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to his promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

"Therefore, beloved, since you're waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace, and count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given to him."

What does that tell you? There's time, still time for you to repent, still time for you to turn away from any preoccupation you have with the business-as-usual approach to life. That rhythmic repetition: They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, being given in marriage. They were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building. On and on and on it goes like the rails on a train. Same rhythm lulling people to sleep in the days of Noah. Same rhythm lulling people to sleep in the days of Lot. And that is the same rhythm lulling people to sleep in our own day, and it'll be the same rhythm in the days of the Son of Man.

Listen, you don't need to die. You don't need to die, my friend. Follow the faith of Noah. Follow the faith of Lot. Neither Noah nor Lot, listen, neither of these guys were

paragons of virtue. And yet, as Leon Morris says, "Both realized the catastrophe must come, and both took measures to save themselves. The Christian message is not for those who think that they deserve a better faith than their neighbors, but for those who, in the midst of universal indifference and complacency, realize the desperateness of their situation and asked, 'What must I do to be saved?'"

My friend, is that you? Noah believed God's promise of judgment, and with no signs of judgment coming, he spent the next 120 years of his life building an ark that would protect him from the coming cataclysm. He was no perfect man, but he heeded God's warning. He believed him, he took him seriously. He worked in faith, and he did it against the grain of his entire culture, and built the ark by faith.

"Noah," Hebrews 11:7, "being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in godly fear he constructed an ark for the saving of his household, and by that he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." You follow the faith of Noah.

Lot as well. He believed in God. Living in Sodom had, had had a detrimental effect on Lot, Lot's mind and warped his judgment. According to Genesis 19:8, he made terrible suggestions about giving his daughters to the men and sending them outside. Terrible stuff. You can't, it's unimaginable to us now.

But Peter, nonetheless, calls him, righteous Lot, three times in 2 Peter 2:7-8. He portrays Lot as a preacher of righteousness, a man who is tormented in his soul by the ungodly behavior of his neighbors. He condemned the men of his age. In fact, when they surrounded his house, they said, "This guy came as a sojourner, and now he's being the judge of us." But Lot escaped the deadly rhythm of that life in Sodom, that life-as-usual. He believed God. He preached righteousness. And when God's judgment came, he left. He escaped Sodom.

Noah escaped the deadly rhythm as well. He believed God. He preached righteousness. He built an ark, sustained diligent

behavior, obedience over 120 years and when the flood came, he was gone; didn't experience it.

My friend, there's salvation for you, too, if you'll only believe the gospel, take refuge in Christ, the ark of our salvation, before he comes in judgment. If you only believe him and heed his warning, and serve him now with your life.

Christian, the warning applies to us, too, lest we follow the rhythms of the people around us, lest we forget this great salvation that's, that's grabbed ahold of our hearts and we get involved in so much in the world. We give ourselves to that lest we come under the influence of the culture around us and drift off to sleep. And for us, the warning comes in that very short command, Luke 17:32, "Remember Lot's wife." "Remember Lot's wife." She escaped Sodom and then turned back and died. But that's for next week. For now, let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for texts like this and delivered by the Lord Jesus Christ that are so clear. In fact, they're so clear they sometimes cause us to tremble. But we remember that



it's by your grace and by your grace alone that we have the faith of Noah and the faith of Lot. We do believe because you've been gracious to us, and now we ask, dear Father, that you would rescue us from this evil age, that you'd teach us to walk obediently to you, righteously before you, to do your will, to do it every day, and to love that.

We pray that you would glorify yourself according to your good and perfect will, to, to be patient toward all your people, and let us be proclaiming the truth of the gospel that other people may be rescued and enter into the ark with us, that other people may leave Sodom along with us.

We pray, Father, that you would use us as shining, bright lights in this culture, that we would be the salt and light that we have been chosen and set apart to be, that our light would shine brightly, and that salt would be a preservative, preserving this world from its decay until you bring the last one in.



And then, Father, we rejoice to see your judgment fall, not because we love to see destruction, but because we love to see you glorified for all that you are, for all who you are. We want to see your righteousness and justice honored. Thank you for your good word to us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.