

22 And He said to the disciples, "The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. 23 "And they will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them. 24 "For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. 25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. 32 "Remember Lot's wife. 33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it. 34 "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 35 "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 36 ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."] 37 And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered."

Eschatology is the study of future things. In Isaiah 46 God says of Himself;

9 "Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,

10 Declaring the end from the beginning
And from ancient times things which have not been done,
Saying, 'My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';

God has a plan for all things. A purpose. A plan to accomplish for His good pleasure. Eschatology is the study of what God has graciously revealed to us about His plans for the future.

This morning we're going to look briefly at some of the components that combine together to ultimately bring in the physical Kingdom of God, the authority to reign of Jesus, in glory, on this earth.

You will recall that before the Christmas break, we looked at the kingdom as Jesus defines it to some pharisees who have asked Him about His kingdom.

20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Jesus said, the kingdom is here. The authority to reign of God as opposed to Satan the usurper who is the current ruler of this world, is in your midst.

It's a concept that is difficult for people to grasp. Right now, and for 2000 years past, two kingdoms have co-existed together, at war with each other, in this world.

In one kingdom, Satan is ruler and he holds all sinners captive, set apart from God, condemned and waiting righteous judgement for their rebellion against God.

In the other kingdom, Jesus has paid the debt for sinners, and He welcomes all who will leave this world behind and come under His authority to be Lord of them.

The 2 kingdoms are divided by ownership. Satan has authority over all of the rebellors born into sin even though God is rightful owner of His creation. Sin separates rebellious people from Holy God. Judgement awaits those.

But the good news is that God has purchased sinners out of that sad mess by the blood of His Son who died in their place to remove their sins. The gospel is that we can be forgiven, and when that transaction takes place, we are snatched out of Satan's realm and brought safely into God's family.

So Jesus begins His answer to the question about the kingdom, that it isn't a realm defined by real estate, it's an ownership of souls. The authority to reign of God is standing right in front of those who asked. Believe and follow the King of kings and be subject to His lordship. Come out of Satan's kingdom and into God's kingdom. Ask forgiveness for sins because of Jesus sacrifice for you.

Same acreage, same clothes you had on, same hair on your head, same everything, except ownership of your heart is transferred to a new Lord who will wash your sins away forever with His blood. The kingdom is inside you. The kingdom is who has authority to reign inside your heart. Repent of your sin and rebellion and give your heart to belong to the King of kings. He is your Lord.

But while that place inside your heart is where the transaction must take place, a change of ownership, of you, is part of the answer, it isn't the final solution to the problem of a stolen planet ruled by an evil usurper.

The ultimate solution involves a return of this very King who the pharisees are speaking to, in blazing glory. A cataclysmic re-taking of this planet that involves imprisoning Satan and his demonic hosts and judgement of all peoples here who have joined Satan in his rebellion.

Jesus Himself is going to come charging out of heaven with thousands upon thousands of His saints and angels with Him and judgement is going to come as He retakes this world as His own to rule and reign over.

Over the centuries since His death and resurrection, millions have transferred their hearts to belong to Him. That's how entrance into His kingdom happens.

But there is an ultimate victory also where the King returns with all who belong to Him and a physical kingdom on this earth with Jesus himself reigning on the throne of David in Jerusalem is set up. Our passage this morning looks at some snippets within that cataclysmic time frame.

But first let me give you an order of end time events chronologically as ordered by men who have given time and effort to study this book. This is the order that we believe is supported biblically.

We are in the church age this morning. A parenthesis, a mystery previously unseen by the prophets. We are in the age of grace extended to all nations to freely come out of this world system and give themselves to the Lordship of Jesus for forgiveness of sins.

Since the church was formed in the book of Acts after Jesus ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit at pentecost, we are in the church age. We still are this morning. He is still calling out a people for His name by grace

The next phase in God's plan of restoring His authority to reign on this earth by Messiah the Prince and rightful heir, along with the deposing of Satan, the evil and rebellious usurper happens during a seven year period called the time of Jacob's trouble. From that word trouble we get our title, the tribulation.

What sharply and decisively ends the church age and begins that seven year period is the removal of the church. The rapture. The calling away of the church to meet the Lord in the air. All real christians, living or sleeping in their graves will hear the shout. ***Come up here.*** And we who are alive will be transformed, and the dead who are redeemed will be resurrected with new bodies also.

That event and also coinciding with the signing of a treaty with Israel and the anti-christ begins the seven years of escalating trouble that culminates with the physical return of Jesus to rescue and save all of Israel who remain at the end of that period.

Jesus will return and rescue Israel. All Israel who have survived will recognize their Messiah and be saved. All rebellors will be judged. And Messiah will reign at Jerusalem on David's throne for a thousand years. After that a new heavens and a new earth will be created for us to dwell with Jesus for eternity.

Now, having put these events very briefly into an eschatological order that we believe can be supported by the scriptures, our passage this morning is a difficult one.

The one thing to keep in your mind as we try to accomodate what Jesus says here is that He is answering the pharisee's questions about His kingdom. They asked Him; *when the kingdom of God was coming,*

They are imagining a physical realm of authority like Rome, with a physical king who rules within given boundaries that are conquered and subject to that king. But Jesus answer explains that His rule is different than what they suppose.

And in our passage we'll look at this morning He tells them of 5 components of His authority to reign, His kingdom in this world. Here is an outline of His answers beginning with what He said in vss 20, 21 that we looked at previously.

1. the kingdom is in hearts. It's already here. It's different than what you are imagining as compared to this worlds kingdoms.
2. the king will go missing. His own will long to see Him physically but won't
3. He will return and it won't be a secret. All eyes will similtaneously see Him returning at every place on earth.
4. He protects and saves those who belong to Him

5. Those who reject Him are lost in a surprising overwhelming devastation.

All of that is in answer to the question of the pharisees who asked; *when the kingdom of God was coming*, We looked at the first part in our outline 3 weeks ago. Vss. 20, 21

“The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.” 1. the kingdom is in hearts. It's already here. It's different than what you are imagining as compared to this world's kingdoms. You're thinking way too small. The King conquers individual hearts in every nation worldwide.

Now then, let's look at the rest of what He tells these men who are rejecting Him. And notice that though these rejecters are within His hearing, He directs this next section of revealed truth to His disciples, not the unbelievers.

22 And He said to the disciples, “The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.

The King is going to go missing. He leaves this earth after He has accomplished redemption and forgiveness of sins by His death on a cross. He is risen from the dead and after a brief time, He ascends in the sight of many witnesses back to His Father in heaven.

The King is not physically present. He gathers souls into His reign. It's a spiritual kingdom and our King is in heaven. For a time. An undisclosed time. The apostles and disciples expected His return in their life times. They were waiting for the physical return of the king.

The saints at Thessalonica were upset because some of them had perished in the Lord and missed His return. And Paul explains that the dead in Christ will rise first to meet Him in the air when He returns for His church. Then those who are alive will join them, in the air, changed. They thought it was next

week.

2000 years later we think it could be next week. The church age has always lived expectantly. Our King will return to this earth to receive us to Himself. And then He will return in judgement to eliminate rebellers who hate Him. Satan and his hosts of demons and all men who belong to Satan who hate God and do not want Him to rule over them.

23 “And they will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.

False Christ's. All through the centuries there have been madmen who claim to be a messiah. Pam and I just finished watching a Netflix series about the Rajneesh Baghdan, a guru from India who people flocked to. Truth that is stranger than fiction. They bought a huge ranch in Oregon and started a commune. A false messiah that led people astray and then the entire thing caved in and imploded.

That's been going on forever. But after the rapture it's going to get weirder. Did you know that the Moslems have an eschatology that parallels ours. They believe someone named Jesus is going to return to earth from heaven and he becomes a prophet who does great miracles alongside of a world wide ruler.

Their world ruler and his prophet Jesus who came from heaven and who does miracles is our antichrist and the false prophet described in Revelation. So when Jesus says don't pay attention to people who are saying; *23b ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.*

Paul tells the Thessalonians about a great deception that will draw many quasi believers away. Someone who claims to be Jesus, who does miracles is over there. Over here. With the guy who has put humpty dumpty the broken world back together and now rules the whole earth. Jesus is his prophet. *‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.*

The guy we watched on Netflix never claimed to be Jesus. He claimed to be a

master. Master of masters. But not Jesus. The moslems are going to have jesus, someone who claims to be jesus, and he does miracles, and he's with the one world ruler. 2nd in the chain of that power. Do NOT follow that jesus. It isn't Jesus the Son of God who sits at God's right hand in heaven.

When our Jesus returns, it will not be done in some corner of Syria or Libya at some tower of some old Mosque. When the real Jesus returns it will be unmistakable and seen by all flesh at the same moment.

24 "For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.

The picture here I believe is a small scale event that explains to our limited understanding what the larger event will be like. We've all witnessed lightning that lights up a night sky so that the whole horizon which was unseen in the dark becomes lit up from east to west.

When Jesus returns in glory at the end of the 7 year tribulation period, the heavens above the earth are going to be rolled up like a scroll and God who has been hidden will be revealed in terrifying glory to all men everywhere.

The old testament prophets tell us of a thick darkness, a blinding darkness all over the world before this event. Then suddenly, like lightning that illuminates a dark sky, the heavens will be rolled away, and the visible return of Jesus in glory with tens of thousands of His holy ones will be seen in the sky coming. All eyes will see it. Terrifying.

Men will cry for the mountains to crush them so they don't have to look at the returning glory. Unimaginable terror for those who hate God.

So don't believe the reports of some jesus who does miracles connected with the one world ruler. Wrong jesus. Ours comes in unmistakable terrifying glory to judge those who hate Him.

25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

We began our little study this morning with a reminder from Isaiah 46 that our God is the only God among all of the other religions and want-2-be gods of this world, ours is the God who tells us how it began, and how it ends.

Of all of the religions of the world, only one has a God who reveals the future. Prophecy. Future things. A coherent plan that is unfolding. Our God tells us about the future. He causes what He says to happen.

Why would we believe any of that? Because of prophecies that are clear and distinct, that have happened after they were prophecied. Other religions have bogus prophecy. Ours has prophecy given in a place in time that we can document, that later came true, just as prophecied. Only God can do that.

Completed prophecy is one of the single greatest apologetics we have to give to a world that thinks we are bizarrely stupid to believe this book. God says things before they happen. And then they happen exactly as He said. That's what we have in these verses beginning in vs 22.

25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

The question was When is the kingdom going to happen. He says the kingdom is inside you. In your heart. You give your heart to God. You transfer ownership of you, to Him. You become His.

Then He says, but the King is going to go missing. After which the King will return in glory. All eyes will see His return in judgement and glory. But before that happens, something else must happen first. *25 But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.*

That distinct prophetic statement would be fulfilled within months of Him stating it. He has set His fact to go to Jerusalem. The time has come for these things to take place.

Did He suffer many things. Yes, it's all written down. Did the generation of

jews alive when He came to be their Messiah reject Him? Yes, they rejected Him and murdered Him. That prophecy had to be fulfilled before the physical kingdom of God on earth with Jesus on the throne of David could come.

Did Jesus depart and does the church long to see one of His days on this earth? Yes, that prophecy was also fulfilled. The King is ascended back to His Father in heaven and we long to see Him again on earth. Fulfilled prophecy.

Everything Jesus tells us here is prophetic. Future events when He spoke it. Why do we believe any of it? Because some of what He clearly stated as future prophecy has already taken place just as He spoke it. So we believe the other things also will come to happen, just as He said.

26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; 29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

In this section Jesus explains a dual truth. In both the case of Noah and also of Lot, a way of escape was preached and offered, and those who believed did escape to safety. But those who rejected the warnings of God were caught in sudden overwhelming judgement.

The doors to escape and safety were closed and sealed on the ark, and the floods came.

Another movie we watched over Christmas was that movie about the family that is in Thailand enjoying a vacation, poolside, playing, laughing, and suddenly you see the tall palm trees out past the hotel on the beach being snapped off by the inrush of a tsunami tidal wave. A moment of sheer terror,

and then you're under water getting swept along. It happened in an instant. Laughter one moment. Terror the next.

It was the same with Lot. The angels told him to hurry out of that place to safety. Move, quickly. Get out. Don't look back. They escaped alone and fire from heaven immediately destroyed the wicked men of that place. Sodom and Gomorrah. So completely vanquished by fire we can't find any remains. Not sure where those places were actually even at.

God warns of judgement. He saves those who listen and believe. He brings His own to safety. Then sudden swift destruction comes on the rejectors.

There is a sense in which the rapture of the church is the door to safety being closed and sealed. God removes His own. After that event, trouble ensues. Tribulation.

Will people be saved during the tribulation period? Yes, by the thousands. But it will cost them their heads. Literally. Those who will not bow to the anti-christ in that time of tribulation will be de-capitated. Slaughtered by the thousands. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. It's a difficult time. Many will pay with their lives to have Jesus as Lord.

30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back. 32 "Remember Lot's wife.

This is where things get chronologically difficult. This little section is also given just like this in Matthew 24, and in Matthew it's clear that this is a reference to when Antichrist enters the jewish temple and sets himself up as God. It happens at the halfway point in the 7 years of trouble.

When that happens the jews whom God is going to protect are told to run for their very lives. So imminent is the threat that they are told to flee to the mountains and not look back. Literally run for your life. If you're on the

housetop don't go in the house to get your stuff or you'll be lost.

If you're in the field run and don't look back. Lot's wife looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt. Run. That part is clear from Matthew 24. But what makes this difficult is where it says; *It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. 31 "On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop*

There is a sense where the prophets use the term "the day of the Lord" to encompass far more than the actual day when Jesus returns in the sky. Day of the Lord is referenced to all of the events, especially after the 3 1/2 year point in the tribulation period.

There is also a sense in which after the church is removed, all of what comes next is the "day of the Lord". So it's difficult to get nit picky on chronology. We get what little chronological time points we have from other places, not Luke.

But the thing that this passage has in common that ties it together with the rest of the discussion is the idea of God providing a means of escape for His people. In this case it's the Jews who are running for their very lives. Run and don't look back. That tidal wave is chasing you up the mountain.

In that movie about the tidal wave sweeping in over the beach and palm trees and resort hotel, the people who understood what was happening were running away from that wave as fast as they could go to higher ground. Run! Those who hear and believe; Run to safety! Literally, run.

33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it.

The common denominator in all of these things is safety with Christ. God keeps His own. Even if it costs you your head, that's a small price to pay to have the God of the universe as your own.

This axiom in vs. 33 has been true in some fashion or the other for the entire life of the church and beyond. If you are a child of God and belong to Him, you have been removed from ownership of this world and it's ruler. That truth has caused many different levels of trouble and cost for christians through the ages.

We are in perhaps the greatest peril of all because our nation was SO user friendly to christians that we didn't experience any costs or change at all to be a christian. Many of us may be caught by surprise as things rapidly change here in our land. 33 *“Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it.*

When real personal cost arrives will we be ready to embrace it in order to have Christ? Or will we fall back on our own old default and hold on to the things of this world . . . at the cost of truth.

Memorize this one verse. This axiomatic truth. Put it in your memory to be called up in the future. 33 *“Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it, and whoever loses his life shall preserve it.*

If fines and imprisonment and loss of property is the new norm for those who refuse to let go of the authority of the clear teaching of this book; suddenly that verse in your memory may preserve you.

In the tribulation period when Antichrist demands worship, this verse still applies. Quite literally. Keep Christ, lose your head. The words of the axiom will never be so literal as then. Let your life go in order to have Christ. It's the best bargain ever.

34 *“I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. 35 “There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, and the other will be left.*

Chronologically this seems out of place to our poor little brains that are trying to put everything in a logical order. Again the discussion has been about

God's provision for those who belong to Him. His ways of escape. Chronology has been second to that.

This little section seems to be describing the rapture of the church that sets the rest of the troubled time spinning. Note that it's night time in one place where people are sleeping. And it's concurrently day time in another place where women are grinding at a mill.

The rapture will be a global event, a moment in time, daylight some places, night time other places where those who belong to God are literally called away from this world. Two people go to bed. In the morning there's only one left there. Two women are working together grinding. Suddenly one is gone and one remains.

The rapture is the single time we know about clearly in scripture where this happens. Is there another incident where it happens again at the end of the tribulation. I'm not the guy who would speak foolishly and say God can't do that.

The point is, the kingdom of God is internal. Two people together in a common place and purpose, one has the Lord Jesus living inside their heart and has been transferred spiritually into the kingdom of God by forgiveness of sins and belief in Jesus Messiah, and the other person in close proximity doesn't have the kingdom dwelling inside them.

One is taken, the other is left. And then the disciples help us out by asking the same dumb questions we all have. Where is this going to be? It's comforting that they didn't fully understand it all either. At least I'm in good company with the clueless disciples.

37 And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered."

Everywhere is the answer. We have two past events that give us size and scope. The flood in the time of Noah was also world wide. Only 8 people

came through that judgement to safety. And Sodom and Gomorrah are an image of they type of devastation worldwide when Jesus returns. Devastating judgement so total that those places were erased from memory.

Listen as we close with a passage from the final book of the old testament. Malachi 4:1 - 3 *“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.” 2 “But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. 3 “And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.*

Think for just a moment as we close about that term, Lord of hosts. Lord of armies. We in the church age who have given our hearts to belong to and be ruled by Jesus will be with Him, as seen in Revelation 19, as He charges out of heaven to conquer and vanquish Satan and all the rebelling kingdoms of this world, we who love Him, now His bride, will be the hosts who charge out of heaven with Him. King of kings. King eternal.

Trust me, you want to be in *that* army, not the armies here who are arrayed to fight against Him and become ashes under our feet.