

The Days and Day of the King and His Kingdom, Part I (Luke 17:20-37)

1. The Question of the Pharisees (v.20)

- As in the previous account (v.11-19), the reader is uninformed about the location or time frame of Jesus' engagement with the Pharisees and His disciples. Presumably, it took place during the same time frame.
- The curiosity of the Pharisees concerning the "kingdom of God" was rooted in a desire to understand when it would arrive. What were the beliefs about the Kingdom and Messiah among the rabbis and Jews in the first century?
 - A. The Messiah would come in the manner of King David (2 Sam. 7). Just as David was a conquering king who fulfilled much of the mandate to drive the nations out of the promised land (Num. 32:52; Deut. 1:8; 27-28), so the Messiah would drive the Romans from the Jewish nation and establish a physical kingdom.
 - B. There will be hardships before the Messiah comes. Beginning with Daniel 12:1 and through the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and rabbinical literature, Jewish tradition agreed that great difficulties and distress would precede the day of salvation, yet those whose names were written in the Book of Life would be delivered.
 - C. There would be astrological signs before the coming. The Greek for "observed" is only used here in the NT. In other literature, it was a technical term for calculating future events by observing the stars. The assumption among the pagans was that astrological calculations of the physical world functioned as a concomitant of the spiritual world.

- The temporal coming of God's kingdom cannot be determined through scientific analysis or localized, as though it was associated with a place or nation (Acts 1:6-8). While God's reign, providence, and sovereignty are complete, thorough, and cosmological in their implication and scope, the physical exercise of that kingdom will not be ushered in all at once.
- Jesus does not answer their question about the locality of the kingdom of God because Jesus' kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36).
- Despite the prevalent theology of the day, the cosmic signs and locality of the kingdom are coming (present tense) in ways that cannot be observed.

2. The Inauguration of the Kingdom (v.21)

- The coming of the kingdom is "in your (Pharisees) midst." What does this mean?
 - Many of the church fathers believed that the kingdom was inside of the believer, which is analogous to the breath of life that YHWH breathed into Adam (Gen. 2:7).
 - However, Scripture does not indicate that the kingdom of God is inside the believer. Additionally, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees, who are viewed almost exclusively negatively in the NT (except for Luke 13:31).
- The disciple of Christ enters the kingdom by faith alone. The Spirit of Christ enters the believer, but the presence and filling of the Spirit are not the kingdom. Instead, the kingdom is a community of blessed residents sealed and empowered by the Spirit, the same Person who empowered Jesus to walk by faith and obedience.
- While the "sign" of the coming of the kingdom will not be observed as the Pharisees expected, it is in their midst. How can this be?
 - The King (incarnate Son) had been with the nation of Israel for thirty years without any public manifestation or exercise of His kingdom. It was after Jesus' baptism that the kingdom was "officially" inaugurated. John the Baptist, the greatest of all the OT saints (7:28), proclaimed a baptism of repentance (Lk. 3:3-8). John's message of repentance (Matt. 3:2) is Jesus' message (Matt. 4:17).
 - Those who receive Jesus (Jn. 1:12) display a pattern of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit (Rom. 14:17).

What is the nature of the kingdom of God?

- While there is a kingdom theme concerning God's providence and sovereignty over all the affairs of time and space, the "hands-on" approach as God dwelled among man and now in man differs in application and scope.

- Since Jesus' inauguration, this kingdom has been God's rule and reign in the hearts of His people. It is unique because it creates a community of regenerated, converted, and sanctified people within His spiritual kingdom.
- The "sign" of the kingdom His disciples are to expect is Jesus' message of the gospel and miracles which affirm that kingdom (4:16-30; 7:22-28; 9:1-6; 10:18; 11:20; 16:16).
- He heals to show Satan's demise (11:20-22). The currency of the kingdom is seen in the church, where God is actively manifesting transformational power through Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; 14:17-18; 16:25-27).
- This kingdom is one of the kingdoms that theologians call "two kingdoms."
- Jesus' kingdom is both here and coming. It cannot be understood apart from Jesus' reference to Himself. The kingdom of God is God's people, God's place, and God's rule. It is a proto-kingdom before the consummation of the kingdom, coming on the day of the Son of Man, distinct from the days of the Son of Man (v.22).

3. The Caution to Jesus' Disciples (v.22-23)

- The Pharisees' question will now become a springboard to addressing His disciples, who may have been curious about matters concerning the kingdom.
- In this address, Jesus does not establish a strict theological-eschatological timetable, as He does not specifically answer the when and where of His coming(s).

What is the "Son of Man"?

- The "Son of Man" is Jesus' primary reference to Himself yet encompasses more than a mere Messianic title. It stresses His manhood of unique order in comparison to other men. It summarizes: (1) His humanity, earthly work, suffering, and death, and (2) His glory in resurrection and to that of His future Advent (Matt. 10:23; 13:41; 16:27-28; 17:9; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44). He is also the one about Whom the OT prophets spoke (Ps. 8:4-6; Dan. 7:13-14) and will be given dominion and rule (Ps. 2:6-12). This title refers to the eternal, self-existing Son's economic activity in a redemptive-eschatological manner through His incarnation and subsequent resurrected body, in many ways referring to His spiritual kingdom and eventual physical kingdom.

Jesus warns His disciples about their desire to see "one" of the days of the Son of Man, but they will not see it. While there is the current day of the Son of Man, which they are experiencing, there will come future days when they long for what they will not see.

- The days are coming and "one of the days of the Son of Man." This reference to "coming days" is reminiscent and prophetic in anticipation of calamity and duress (Amos 4:2; Jer. 7:32-34; 16:14; Zech. 14:1).
- They will desire to see Jesus' kingdom come (Matt. 6:10) and are to pray to that end. The kingdom they long to see is the result of relief from persecution. They will not see that day.

4. The Presentation and Future Revelation of the Son of Man (v.24)

- There is the "one of the days" that the disciples will desire to see but which they will not (v.22-23). However, there will be a day of the Son of Man that is His day (v.24). On this day, He will come "like lightning."
- Many Jews believed that the Messiah would appear incognito and be recognized only after inspection and only when known by Elijah. Jesus, in contrast, states that the Son of Man's appearance will be like lightning.
- Lightning is a common symbol for a theophany, an appearance of God (Ex. 19:16-19; 2 Sam. 22:15; Ps. 18:14; 97:3-4), and stresses glory and majesty.
- None will foresee it, but all will see it. That will only happen once this generation rejects the Son of Man. This generation is a metonym for dullness, wickedness, and rejection (7:31). It is a metonymy for the people of God as stiff-necked, dull, and rebellious who reject God's purposes and God's representatives (Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; Deut. 10:16; Lk. 9:41; Acts 7:51-53).
- Jesus is prophesying about His passion, indicating that He must suffer.