

# **LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Jan. 2: Don't let Christ's return catch you unprepared\_122004**

December 17, 2004

Posted: 12/17/04

**LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Jan. 2**

## **Don't let Christ's return catch you unprepared**

Luke 17:20-37

**By Pakon Chan**

*Chinese Baptist Church, Arlington*

During the New Testament time, much apocalyptic literature was circulating in society. The Pharisees knew all the apocalyptic expectations raised by the people of Israel under the Roman oppression. They expected the Messiah would come to re-establish David's rule.

It was their understanding of the coming Messiah and the kingdom of God. There was not any difference in the understanding of the Messiah and God's kingdom at that time between the disciples and the Pharisees.

**Present now**

After seeing Jesus perform so many miracles, they wanted to know if Jesus was the Messiah. There was a practical reason behind their curiosity, for if Jesus was the Messiah, when would he restore the Davidic kingdom for them? To them, the Davidic kingdom was nothing less than the kingdom of God.



But Jesus gave them an answer beyond their understanding. The kingdom of God was not what they had expected. It had nothing to do with politics or land. Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

Jesus told them the kingdom of God was where his sovereignty reigned. If we have accepted Jesus as our Lord in our lives, God's kingdom is in our lives. God's kingdom has no boundaries that can be located on a map.

It starts in the hearts of his believers. "Within you" can also be understood as "among you." God's kingdom is within Christians, since the kingdom is in every Christian's heart. If we do God's will and let him be our Lord, then we are the kingdom of God.

### **Not yet**

Even though we do not wait until we die or the last days to see the kingdom of God, God's kingdom is not yet totally here. God's kingdom will be fully established the day Jesus returns to earth.

Before then, the disciples will wait for a long time. Therefore, Jesus warns them while they are waiting, "Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them" (v. 23).

There are at least two reasons we should not run after the false prophets. Jesus tells us that, when he returns, it will be very clear and visible to everyone, just like the lightning flashing in the sky (v. 24). The other reason is the expectation that God has for us. Jesus reminds us to be prepared always to wait for his return.

He uses the story of Noah to make this point clear. Noah had prepared for the flood, so he and his family were saved. The people of his generation did not heed his warning, so they were destroyed by the flood.

If we are always prepared for Jesus' return, we don't need to waste our time and energy guessing and will not "go running off after the false prophets."

### **Not expected**

Jesus goes on to warn us not to take chances as if he will delay his return. Like the flood in Noah's day and the fire in Lot's day, Jesus will return unexpectedly.

I have heard many people say: "I will accept Jesus as my Savior in my last years. I want to enjoy my life now." Or, "I don't want to serve the Lord until I am retired."

Jesus will remind us, "Remember Lot's wife" (v. 32). We may think that if we give our time and life in serving God, we will lose them. So we wait until old age, and not much time and life are left to serve God. Or we wait until the last minute that we cannot enjoy our life, then we will accept Jesus and become a "ready to go Christian."

For those who are not prepared for Jesus' return, the warning is very scary. Jesus tells us that "whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (v. 33). And he goes on to tell us that "on the

night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left” (v. 34).

It is a very good reminder at the beginning of the year. When we make plans for this year, we should have a right attitude of preparing for the return of our Lord. Please put the second coming of Jesus into your perspective when you make your plans for the year 2005.

### **Discussion questions**

- Are you expecting the return of our Lord? What do you expect it to be like?
- What emotions does the thought of Christ's return stir up within you?
- What have you put off that you would do immediately if you knew that Christ would return today?
- How would your church's ministry be different this year if it were certain Christ would return Jan. 1, 2006?
- How will your understanding of Jesus' return affect your plans for this year?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.