

• A question about the kingdom

### 1. There is a worldly way of seeking the kingdom of God

• The Pharisees thought of the kingdom in political terms

• They were also more interested in 'signs' than experiencing God

As Jesus continues on His last journey to Jerusalem, the Pharisees raise a question about the kingdom of God.

1. **There is a worldly way of seeking the kingdom of God.** The Pharisees' approach to the kingdom of God was very nationalistic. They thought the 'kingdom of God' consisted largely of political influence and the release of Israel from colonial oppression by the Romans. The kingdom would come – so they thought – when God sent a mighty military hero to release them from domination by Rome. There are still people who take 'the kingdom' in a very political and earthly manner.

The Pharisees were also interested in 'signs' of the coming kingdom. When Jesus' disciples asked, '*When ... And what will be the sign...?*'<sup>1</sup>, they were asking the two questions that the Pharisees asked. People would point to events that were happening in their own day and say 'Here it is!' or 'There it is!', interpreting the events as 'signs'. The same mentality is common today. It is an approach to prophecy that is interested in intellectual puzzles more than in experiencing God.

<sup>1</sup> 21:7

### 2. The kingdom of God is available now!

• The sign-seeking approach is entirely wrong

• If the King is present, the kingdom of God is present

• The question is 'Will you allow Jesus to be your King?'

2. **The kingdom of God is available now!** The sign-seeking approach is entirely wrong. Jesus said, '*It is not by observation that the kingdom of God comes, nor will they say, "Look, it is here! There it is!"...'*'<sup>1</sup>. When worldly people like the Pharisees try to guess when the kingdom of God will come with power, they are missing the kingdom of God in their lives altogether.

<sup>1</sup> 17:20

Jesus says: '*... because, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.*' The kingdom of God is God's acting in power through his Son who is the King! If the King is present, the kingdom of God is present. The question is not: when will the kingdom of God come? It is here already. The question is: when will you enter the kingdom of God? God wants to act in power in your life, through Jesus. He wants Jesus to be your King. The kingdom has come! It is Jesus' acting as King. It is Jesus' producing righteousness in our lives.

### 3. The kingdom of God comes in stages

• Past, present and future

3. **The kingdom of God comes in stages.** It has come; it is coming; it will come. Right now the kingdom of God is coming in the lives of all who submit to Jesus. Yet the **present** coming of the kingdom is not irresistible or overpowering. It is possible to miss what is happening. One day the kingdom of God will appear in glorious power. One stage of the kingdom is present already, but it will end dramatically when another stage of the kingdom comes, in overwhelming power and irresistible glory.

### 4. The secret to enjoying the future coming of the kingdom is to receive it now

4. **The secret to enjoying the future coming of the kingdom is to receive it now.** The Pharisees were wanting the kingdom of God to come, but they assumed that it would involve the exaltation of Israel, and that they would be involved in these blessings. Jesus says: the kingdom of God is here now! Be part of the future blessings of the kingdom by receiving the power of God into your life now!

*'The time will come when you will long to see one of the days of the*

• Days of great difficulty and suffering are ahead – before the kingdom comes fully

• When Jesus comes there will be no need for Guesswork!

• We must experience the kingdom of God now childlike faith

5. When future manifestations of the kingdom come, they will come suddenly

• Here Jesus is speaking of the fall of Jerusalem

• Sudden judgements come when the time is ripe

• Best to be ready now

Son of Man, but you will not see it<sup>□1</sup>. Jesus is referring to the period that is just about to come. He is walking towards Jerusalem. He knows that times of great trouble are ahead. The disciples will long for God's kingdom to come to Israel, but there will be days of great difficulty. 'The days of the Son of Man' refers to days when the royal power of God is strong. The disciples will want days of evangelistic success for Israel, but it will be delayed and Israel will go through times of suffering.

At such a time they must not be misled by prophetic cranks trying to guess what is happening from the 'signs of the times'<sup>□1</sup>. When Jesus comes there will be no need for guesswork! A flash of lightning is sudden and startling and is seen by everyone. Jesus' 'coming' – both finally and (by way of anticipation) repeatedly during the course of history – will be dramatic<sup>□2</sup>. If people want to know what must come before it, the answer is: the suffering of Jesus on the cross<sup>□3</sup>!

We may want the kingdom of God to come dramatically and long for the 'days of the Son of Man' – the Spirit of God working in great power – to be present. But for much of the time the kingdom of God comes quietly, through childlike faith<sup>□1</sup>. I must experience the kingdom of God now by childlike faith.

5. When future manifestations of the kingdom come, they will come suddenly. Luke 17:26–36 is not referring only to the final 'Second Coming' of Jesus, but to the many times and ways in which sudden judgement comes. He especially has in mind the fall of Jerusalem, which took place in AD 70. This is clear because of verses 31–36. No one will worry about going back home to collect possessions in the final 'coming' of Jesus. (The similar verses in Mark 13:15–18 clearly refer to the fall of Jerusalem; and the whole of Luke 21:5–33 refers to the fall of Jerusalem as 21:32 makes clear.)

When do these sudden judgements come? Verse 37 gives the answer: vultures gather where there is a corpse. When God sees the time is ripe, the Son of man comes in judgement. In AD 70, after Israel had been given much opportunity to receive Jesus, the vultures would gather. That is, the Roman armies would come. The Pharisees got excited about exciting and interesting matters of prophecy. They would do better to receive the kingdom of God into their lives **now** and be ready for sudden judgements at any time.

□1 17:22

□1 17:23

□2 17:24

□3 17:25

□1 see 18:17



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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