

The Invisible Kingdom of God, Part 1

Scripture: Luke 17:20-21

Code: 42-221

Open your Bible, if you will, with me to the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 17. In our continuing study of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ as written by one of the four gospel writers, Luke, we come to what is a very, very important section. And I want you to look with me today at the subject of the visible King and his invisible Kingdom...the visible King and his invisible Kingdom.

As we come to Luke chapter 17 and verse 20, we are embarking in a very, very important and foundational subject. The subject is the Kingdom of God with a particular emphasis on its future realization, its future consummation, its future fulfillment. This takes up the remainder of the seventeenth chapter and this is not the last time we will look at this subject, it will appear again in more detail in chapter 21. So as we come to the final sections of this great gospel, we're going to be looking into the future at the glorious Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, not with a fictional view, but with a biblical accurate factual view.

But before we can really take a good look at what the Kingdom will be in the future, we need to understand what the Kingdom is in the present. Before we can understand the future reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to understand the present reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is where we begin in verses 20 and 21.

Verse 20 begins like this, "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, nor will they say...Look, here it is...or,..There it is. For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.'"

Now just the topic of the Kingdom and King is foreign to us. We've never had a king in the United States of America. In fact, we were born in a revolution against a king. We pride ourselves on never having been a monarchy. The fact of the matter is, most of the civilized world presently and for a long time does not exist under the rule of kings. There are still some royal families here and there in the world who are symbolic in terms of their royalty, rather than actual in terms of their sovereignty. The world has moved away from kings. People with absolute supremacy, absolute authority, absolute power, absolute will, we don't live under people who are what we would call majesties who can do whatever they like, whenever they like, with whomever they like without any recourse. In fact, when we find somebody who rules like that, we usually call him a dictator and he frightens us and the free

world becomes outraged at such persons being outraged with the idea of autocratic domination, and we amass our powers, political powers and sometimes military powers, to try to liberate people from those who have absolute dominion over them. Our world is not a world of kings anymore.

We have no experience of what it means to live under absolute monarchy. That's why the world is so horrified currently with North Korea and how hard it is for us to identify with one little man being absolutely sovereign, not only getting his way but being adored and worshiped by everyone. Our understanding of sovereignty and our understanding of power and our understanding of privilege and authority and rule and right is defused. It's defused in a balance of power, it's spread out over many people and many agencies and many institutions in a kind of checks and balance system. And, in fact, even the system is basically the product of the populous, the people determine where they're going to place their sovereignty and in whom they're going to place their sovereignty and so the people ultimately collectively are sovereign. It is the very antithesis to a monarchy. We want to make sure that no one has too much power anywhere, anytime over anyone. No one is supreme. No one is sovereign. No one has absolute right, privilege, power and authority.

So we don't have a very good understanding of that concept, absolute supremacy, unassailable right. That's just not in our understanding. And the media continues down the same path because the media is a product of our thinking and if anybody in any area of life gets a little too big for his britches, the media go after him like piranha, pull everyone down to an equal level. But it is precisely what our society disdains that is exactly what God claims for Himself...absolute supremacy, absolute sovereignty, absolutely free exercise of His will without any consultation, without any restraint. It's exactly what it means to be king...king of everything. In fact, the Apostle Paul gives us a benediction that sums this up in Romans chapter 11 when he says this, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways. For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor, or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever. Amen."

God has supreme wisdom, he says. God has supreme knowledge. God makes supreme judgments that are made on the basis of information that is not available to us, it is unsearchable. And what God does we cannot understand because His ways are unfathomable. No one has given Him counsel. He has not asked the advice of anyone, nor is He obligated to anyone who did anything for Him as if He needed to pay him back. He is absolutely supreme and sovereign.

The Apostle Paul, I think, received the understanding of that great doxology on the absolute supremacy and sovereignty of God from Isaiah because in Isaiah chapter 40 we read in verse 12, "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and marked off the heavens by the span and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales?" In other words, who is equal to Me? Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord?

Who has given advice to God? Or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding? And the answer to all those rhetorical questions is no one. Based upon His absolute perfection, based upon His perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom, perfect power, based upon His perfect will, He does exactly what He wants when He wants with whom He wants and for the purpose He wants.

Job understood this in chapter 42 and verse 2, he said, "I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted." The psalmist in Psalm 33:11 said, "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation." Isaiah 14:27 says, "The Lord of host has planned and who can frustrate it and as for His outstretched hand, who can pull it back?" God is absolutely sovereign, plans what He wants, purposes what He wants and does exactly what He plans and exactly what He purposes and no one alters it. Again the prophet Isaiah in the 46th chapter becomes a vehicle to reveal this same great truth, verse 8, "Remember this and be assured, recall it to mind, you transgressors," you're going to have to clear up your normally sin-stained thinking to think accurately about God, "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, 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.'" It is because of this truth about God that we are instructed in 1 Chronicles 29 and verse 10 with these words, "So David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly and David said, 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever, Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth, Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all, both riches and honor come from Thee and Thou doest rule over all and in Thy hand is power and might, it lies in Thy hand to make great and to strengthen everyone. Now therefore, our God, we thank Thee and praise Thy glorious name.'" Sovereignty...God is the absolute sovereign over all. God is King.

And that is why the Kingdom is such a critical aspect of biblical teaching. God is presented as a King who rules over a Kingdom. And there are future realities about that Kingdom that Jesus is about to teach in Luke 17. But in order for us to understand what He's going to say, we have to have a broader, more comprehensive understanding of the idea of the rule of God and His Kingdom. So let's go a little deeper into thinking about the Kingdom.

We learn from Scripture that God is sovereign over two realms...two realms. And I'm going to be simple, I'm going to try to reduce it down so that you can understand it. It's profoundly important for us to grasp this. And so I'm going to take some time to lay the foundation, even though we're only looking at two verses. You really do need to understand this, it will make all the rest of the future understanding of the Kingdom rich for you to understand.

There are two kingdoms. There is the material kingdom, there is the spiritual kingdom. That's the simplest way to understand it. There is the material kingdom and there is the spiritual kingdom. When God created out of His sovereign will, He made things material and He made persons spiritual. And He is King over both domains.

Now in order for us to understand His unfolding purpose in the world, it will help us to keep those two kingdoms in mind, or those two areas in which God exercises sovereign rule. First of all, there is the external universal kingdom over which He rules by creation...the external universal kingdom over which He rules by creation. Everything He created is under His sovereign power. Psalm 10:16, "The Lord is King forever." Psalm 29:10, "Yes the Lord sits as King forever." Psalm 103:19, "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens and His sovereignty rules over all." He's the King of everything that He has created...everything. Again the psalmist in Psalm 145 says, "They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom and talk of Your power, the glory of the majesty of Your Kingdom. Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom and Your dominion endures throughout all generations." This is the grand universal external kingdom of God by which He rules sovereignly over everything that He has made. It was a king who thought that he could compete with the sovereign of the universe, a king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar who ended up being judged by God for attempting to steal the glory from God, he ended up as a raving maniac seven years living like an animal. And when he finally came to his senses, he understood and in Daniel chapter 4 verse 34 we read at the end of that period, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me." This is where all reasonable people end up. If you're truly reasonable, you're going to say what Nebuchadnezzar says, "I blessed the Most High, praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, His Kingdom endures from generation to generation, all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. No one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?' And at that time, my reason returned to me and my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out, so I was reestablished in my sovereignty and surpassing greatness was added to me." God gave him his little place in God's greater Kingdom. "Now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

This is the universal, external sovereignty of God over everything He has made...everything animate, inanimate, everything material, everything spiritual in the universe is in this Kingdom under Christ's rule, every molecule, every atom, every component of an atom belongs in this Kingdom. But as true as that is, this kingdom is in a state of rebellion. It is also cursed. It is cursed by sin and that curse has stained this kingdom spiritually and materially. The universe is winding down, second law of thermodynamics is operating, entropy is in place, the universe is in the process of disintegrating, it is headed toward a disastrous dissolution in the uncreation described by Peter as all the elements of the universe melting with fervent heat in an atomic implosion. And so this universe exists groaning under

the curse.

The rebellion is not just manifest in the material part of this universal kingdom but in the spiritual part as well, as there are demons who having been thrown out of heaven and led by Satan manifest their rebellion by designing ways in which they can thwart the Kingdom of God, foolish as it may seem, and useless as it is. And they have been aided and abetted by mankind who succumb to the temptation of Satan in the garden, catapulting the whole human race into sin and rebellion, so you have a whole humanity with a host of angels who have rebelled against God. He is still sovereign over them. It might surprise you to know that God is the devil's God and God is the God of the demons as He is over all the ungodly sinners who ever lived in this world. He is sovereign over them all even though His Kingdom has been cursed, He cursed it, it has been judged, He judged it, and one day He will restore it, one day He will recover it, one day He will gain the paradise that was lost in the garden.

But the discussion that Jesus has in this text of Luke 17 is not about that kingdom, not really. It's about a Kingdom that exists within that Kingdom. God is King over the external, universal Kingdom which includes everything He has created. God is also King over the internal personal Kingdom which includes everyone He has recreated. He is King universally by creation. He is King personally by revelation. He is King universally through what we could call natural revelation. He is King personally through special revelation, the revelation of Scripture.

So God rules the Kingdom of the universe. God also rules the Kingdom of the heart. He rules one by creation, He rules another by recreation, through revelation which is inscripturated. You can see the rule of God in His universal Kingdom by just looking out there. That's Romans 1, so that everybody on the planet is without excuse if he doesn't see God, the Godhead and His massive power and wisdom in the creation. God has revealed Himself in that creation. So He is the King who has manifested Himself, there is a form of revelation, it is that natural revelation in human reason and in the moral law written in the heart and the conscience that makes a man responsible for the knowledge of God as King over His created universe. But in that other Kingdom, inside that larger Kingdom, that smaller Kingdom where God rules personally over the heart, over the soul, internally, not by virtue of creation but by virtue of recreation, He rules there not through natural revelation but through special revelation. And that's the Scripture.

In this Kingdom, God is also King. He is sovereign over who enters and how they enter. He exercises absolute sovereign authority in the internal personal Kingdom which He rules through recreation through special revelation. He exercises absolute right, absolute power, absolute privilege, does exactly what He wills by the means of His Word. Just as He spoke the first Kingdom into existence, so He speaks the second one into existence. In the external universal Kingdom where everything and everyone He created is subject to Him, He rules and in that second internal personal Kingdom where everyone who responds to His revelation and His recreated is subject to Him, He also rules.

The first and obvious implication of this is Jesus Christ is Lord and King over His spiritual Kingdom, as He is over His material Kingdom. His external universal rule is direct. His internal personal rule is direct. God rules the universe directly, hands on. And God rules the internal personal spiritual kingdom directly hands on by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He is sovereign in the universe and He is sovereign in His people.

But His rule in the universal kingdom is immediate, without a mediator. He does what He wants the way He wants and He does it by Himself. He controls everything in the created universe on His own. He brought it into being, He upholds it by His power. He is the unobservable, unknown, invisible, mysterious, unidentified power in the molecules of this universe that holds everything together. He is the one that Einstein couldn't find and neither can anybody else. He doesn't mediate His rule in the universe through anyone, it's direct and immediate. But in His personal kingdom, in the internal kingdom, His rule is also direct. He comes to live inside His own people, hands on. We become the temple of the living God. But this kingdom has been mediated to us through mediators who brought us the revelation. The natural revelation which is available to all doesn't need a mediator, it's there for everyone to see with every day's life.

But this special revelation which can bring us into His internal spiritual personal kingdom and under His sovereign rule spiritually, the truth that ushers us into that kingdom is not brought to us through creation, it is brought to us through revelation and for that God chose mediators...mediators. He spoke through mediators. He spoke through angels the Scripture says when He gave His law. But for the most part, He spoke through men, through people. He spoke to and through Adam and He revealed Himself to Adam directly. And no doubt Adam disclosed what he had learned of God to his family and to those who were a part of his life for the almost thousand years he lived. Maybe it was Adam's instruction given to him by God that informed Cain and Abel the proper sacrifice which being violated by Cain led to the first murder. But God revealed Himself to Adam and through Adam.

God revealed Himself to Noah who became a preacher of righteousness, who preached to his whole generation for the full duration of 120 years while he was building the ark. And God was through that mediator bringing the words of righteousness, that is how to be reconciled to a righteous God. God mediated His Word and His wisdom and His message through Abraham, giving Abraham a covenant, and through Isaac, and then through Jacob and then through Joseph and then God mediated His rule through Samuel, and God mediated His rule through priests, and God mediated His rule through prophets who spoke the revelation that God gave them and they all wrote it down, Moses writing the Pentateuch and others like Samuel writing and then David writing and Solomon writing and the prophets. This is a message mediated through men.

In fact, Israel was a nation of mediators. God narrowed that mediation, poured it through one funnel, if you will, that funnel was the nation Israel. In the ninth chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul says

concerning Israelites that, "To them belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh who is over all God blessed forever amen." They were the funnel for every bit of it into the world. They were God's witness nation. They were the mediators. So it makes their unbelief so sad, so tragic.

But then there was a culminating mediator, the one true all-glorious unequal mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is the culminating and all-glorious mediator, an unequal mediator because He was the true, pure, exact expression of God. The writer of Hebrews said, "He is the radiance of His glory, the exact representation of His nature and upholds all things by the Word of His power." He is the exact duplicate of God, He is God. He said, "If you've seen Me, you've...what?...you've seen God the Father. I and the Father are one." And John begins His epistle, "The Word was with God, the Word was God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory." Yes, He is the culminating, all-glorious, unequal, one great mediator of God's revelation because He is the pure and exact representation of God. And secondly, because He makes reconciliation possible, He becomes the only saving mediator. That's why 1 Timothy tells us, there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He is the ultimate mediator because He's the perfect representation of God. He is the ultimate mediator because He is the one who brings sinners to God by providing the perfect sacrifice. He is not just this mediator because He's God, He's also King. He comes into this world not to establish sovereignty over the material created universe, He has that. He had that already. He was born a King. A Persian king maker showed up at His birth to acknowledge that He was a King. Gabriel comes to Mary and says you're going to have a child and He's going to be a King and He's going to rule forever. And the psalmist said in Psalm 2 that the day will come when God sends His Son to be King. Isaiah said, "A child will be born, a son will be given and universal government will be upon His shoulders and His name shall be Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God because He is the Father of eternity." Jesus Christ coming into the world is King because Jesus is God. He is the creator God, the eternal God. He and the Father are one. Isaiah repeats this in chapter 11, he repeats it in chapter 12, Jeremiah repeats it in Jeremiah 23:5 and 6 and it's all through the Psalms.

So Jesus came into the world not to establish universal kingdom, universal reign over the created universe, He already had that. He already had that. He showed it. He could control the sea. He controlled death. He controlled disease. He controlled creation. He could create food out of nothing and wine. He was God and He had power over His whole created universe. He said, "If I wanted to, I could have instantly here a legion of angels." He said, "No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down by Myself." He wasn't looking for control over the universe, He came to establish the Kingdom in the heart.

Now the problem is, that's not the way Jews saw it. The only thing they ever expected was the big glorious kingdom as laid out in the Old Testament by the prophets. They had studied these

prophecies diligently. They knew what the Old Testament promised. All of the...all of the Jews, all of the Pharisees were basically premillennialists..to put it simply. They all believed the Messiah would come and establish a Kingdom. They never believed anything but that. How could there be anything but that? They certainly weren't amillennialists, they didn't believe a kingdom would just erupt somewhere and then when the kingdom was in full flower Jesus would come. They didn't believe that at all. They all believed that the King would come first and then establish His glorious Kingdom. And what would that Kingdom involve? Well it would involve everything that was promised to Abraham and the covenant to Abraham was the promise of a great nation, the promise of a land of a ruler of spiritual blessing, Genesis 12. In Deuteronomy 30 there was the Palestinian aspect of that covenant called the Palestinian Covenant in which God promises them a restoration to the land and the occupation of the original grant of that land. And then along comes the David Covenant in 2 Samuel chapter 7 and they are promised a Kingdom and a glorious King out of the loins of David. They were also promised a New Covenant, Jeremiah 31, where the whole nation would be blessed, the whole nation would become righteous, the whole nation would know God.

They were also told by the prophets that the Kingdom would be glorious. A lion would die down with a lamb and children could play in a snake pit and the whole topography of the planet would be changed and the Lord would create a river flowing from Jerusalem out to make the desert blossom like a rose. They had all kinds of things in the Old Testament to look to that there would come the prevailing peace and joy and comfort, the absence of poverty, the absence of sickness, long life. If you died a hundred years, the prophet said, you die as a baby. They knew all of that. They knew that the Kingdom would be a time of obedience and people wear bells on their robes that sung out for holiness. The prevailing truth, Isaiah 65, would dominate the world. The Holy Spirit would be poured out, Joel said that, Joel 2. And the Messiah would rule as King and there would be nobles around Him ruling as vice regents with Him in the glory of that Kingdom. Jerusalem would be the center of the world. All nations would come to fight against the King when He came and the King would defeat all those nations in a great battle and He would triumph and all nations would be subjected then to His rule and He would reign. And Israel would be the crowning nation of the world and the jewel in the crown would be the city of Jerusalem which would rise to the prominence over all cities. They knew all that. The prophets had spelled it out.

And so, they were waiting for it to happen. In fact, they had put together a pretty good eschatology. There's a book called *The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Christ*, written some time ago. And it's written by a historian, Emil Schurer. And in this book he collects all of the ancient material from the time of Christ and pieces together the eschatology that the Jews had basically at that time. And this is a little compilation of what he wrote in that book. Here is what they expected. First, the coming of Messiah would be preceded by a time of tribulation or trouble, even like birth pangs. Second, in the midst of this trouble and turmoil there would appear a prophet like Elijah, heralding the coming of Messiah. Thirdly, Messiah would establish His Kingdom, age and glory and vindicate His people. Fourthly, and they found this in the Cybelene(?) oracles, the nations would ally to fight

Messiah, they would literally interrupt all of their wars to come and fight against Him. Fifthly, the Messiah would destroy all the opposing nations, subjugate them all. Number six, the restoration of Jerusalem would occur. It would be made new and magnificent. Number seven, scattered Jews from all over the world would return to Israel. Number eight, Israel would become the center of the world and all nations would be subjected to the Messiah. And number nine, the Messiah would establish the Kingdom and the Kingdom would be a time of eternal peace, righteousness and glory.

That's pretty good, that's pretty accurate. Tribulation, an announcement of the arrival of the Messiah, a prophet before He comes like Elijah. He comes, the world fights Him. He defeats them. He sets up His Kingdom, restores Jerusalem, gathers His people, His sheep from all over the world. Israel becomes the center of the world. Jerusalem the throne from which He reigns. And He goes into a Kingdom that is forever, a Kingdom of peace, righteousness and glory. That's pretty good eschatology. That's my eschatology. And some people say somebody invented this in the 1800s. These expectations on the part of the Jews were drawn from Old Testament teaching and they were embellished by extra biblical writers. They got carried away. The basic eschatology is pretty sound. And remember, they didn't see two comings, they only saw one. Their idea was, all Jesus needed to do was show up and do this. They did not expect that He would come to establish a spiritual Kingdom. They weren't looking for an internal kingdom. They weren't looking for a spiritual Kingdom. To put it simply, they weren't looking for a Savior because they didn't need to be saved. And that's why His message was so offensive. It wasn't that they didn't want the Kingdom. It wasn't that they didn't like to hear Him talk about the Kingdom. It wasn't that they weren't looking for a King. It was the kind of Kingdom He was talking about that agitated them.

They tried on a number of occasions to force Him to be a King, didn't they? And he had to prevent that from happening. In their minds they had enough tribulation. They were living through the tribulation. They had had enough. The time was right for the King and the Kingdom. They were weary of the subjugation and the oppression of a series of conquerors who had occupied their land, currently the Romans. And when Jesus came along, He just couldn't be the Messiah because where was all the hoopla. Not only did He not knock off the Romans and establish His throne, but where were all the signs in heaven? Because they had developed around this basic eschatological scheme the ideas that there would be signs in the heavens, there would be signs in the earth, cataclysmic events...not healings and even resurrections and things that Jesus was doing, they did not anticipate those things, that didn't fit into their system. They were looking for cataclysmic wonders in the sky and cataclysmic wonders in the earth. And then when Jesus started talking about dying, it was an absolute absurdity because their understanding of the King is He comes to conquer, not to be conquered. And even the disciples were struggling with their own expectations of this Kingdom. They knew those covenants in the Old Testament. They knew those prophecies, the Pharisees did who asked the question to Jesus. They knew that God keeps His Word. They knew that God had to fulfill His promises. And it just frankly didn't look like Jesus was the one.

Now look, they were...they were really in to all things theological. They were in to everything theological. Everything related to the Kingdom of God was huge to them, huge. And they thought themselves to be THE most skilled observers. Even though Jesus confronted them on several occasions and told them they were totally inept at discerning the times, they thought they really were skilled interpreters and they had developed their very extravagant ideas. And it seemed like such a good time for it all to happen.

Go to chapter 19 verse 11. In chapter 19 and verse 11 it says, "And while they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable because He was near Jerusalem and they supposed that the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately." Sure, if He's the Messiah and now, you remember, as He gets nearer to Jerusalem, there's this wave of enthusiasm around Him based upon the resurrection of Lazarus. Maybe He is the one, maybe when He comes in Jerusalem the cataclysms will happen, the earth will shake and the sky will do its thing, and all those signs will burst upon us. So they were supposing the Kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. And that...that became a mob kind of psychology that took over the mob. And when He got to Jerusalem, they started throwing palm branches down, "Hail, King of the Jews, Son of David." It's almost like they...they were wishing they could make it happen by the power of positive confession. All they ever saw was the eschatological aspect of the Kingdom. All they ever saw was the end culminating reality of the universal Kingdom, God taking back His world, God taking back His nation, sending His King to rule.

For them when the Messiah came, He would come with great signs, destroy all the enemies, establish Israel's national sovereignty and prosperity, rule over all the nations on the face of the earth. They had no concept of the spiritual, internal kingdom. And so their question...let's go back to our text, Luke 17, we need to get back there at least once, this is just the introduction, Luke 17. Their question is when? The question is when? Having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God was coming? They're asking when, that's their big question. We're ready. If You're it...and I think there's dripping sarcasm in their even asking because they don't believe He's the one, but giving Him the benefit of the doubt because He talks about the Kingdom all the time, they ask Him, When...When, You haven't done it yet, we haven't seen any signs, we haven't seen any indications whatsoever, when is it going to happen? And He answered them and said, and this basically is an answer that says you've got it all wrong, completely. Your whole understanding is a misconception. He says, "The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed." It's not what you think. It's not what you think. "Nor will you say, here it is, or there it is, for behold, the Kingdom of God is literally *entos*, within you." They didn't want to hear that, they didn't even understand that. What in the world is that?

Even the disciples were confused about the Kingdom. If you look down to verse 37, Jesus speaks to the disciples starting in verse 22 and in verse 37 they said to Him, "Where, Lord, where?" Where is

the Kingdom? They wanted to know when...the Pharisees. The Sadducees wanted to know where. And Jesus to both of them says, "You've got it all wrong. That shouldn't be your preoccupation." It's not about where, it's not about when.

Now I want to close, and I have to do this, so you have to be patient with me. I want to close with a very important comprehension. Turn to Luke 13 and then we'll pick this...the actual text up next time, but this will help you. Verse 18 of Luke 13, "Therefore He was saying, what is the Kingdom of God like?" How can Jesus Himself describe the Kingdom? What's it like? "And to what shall I compare it?" I know what you all think. I know what your eschatology is. But what is the Kingdom of God really like? And to what shall I compare it? And then He gives this amazing answer. "It's like a mustard seed which a man took, threw in his own garden and it grew and became a tree and the birds of the air nested in its branches."

What in the world is that? Well...a mustard seed was what? The smallest seed in the garden, right? Of all the seeds. And out of that smallest seed comes this massive tree that could be as high...as big as 25 feet in diameter and birds could live in it. That's how big it was. And the point Jesus is saying, what's the Kingdom like? It starts small and it gets bigger and bigger and bigger and it grows and it progresses.

Now let me help you to understand this. The Kingdom of God begins in the heart of all who believe and it collectively grows and grows and grows until it finally is fully realized in its millennial glory which is the final phase of the expanding growing Kingdom on earth. That's what He's saying and He says it again, the next verse, verse 20, "And again He said, to what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? It's like leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal until it was all leaven." What does leaven do? What's the word? Permeate and cause to expand. And so what Jesus is saying is...Look, I begin with a spiritual Kingdom in the heart which is now realized and it expands and moves and becomes greater and greater until one day it will cover the whole earth in the millennial glory when Christ comes to reign.

In His first coming then, He establishes the internal spiritual Kingdom. And at His Second coming, He takes that to its consummated end in the glory of the millennial Kingdom. And then watch this, after that this whole universe as we know it is destroyed and He creates the new heaven and the new earth in which eternally and for the first time since the Fall both kingdoms are merged into one. That's basically the big picture of the Kingdom. Now that's just starting this text, next time we're going to see how powerful our Lord's words are.

Father, we thank You for Your truth and its consistency. Fill our hearts with anticipation of what it means to have You as King on the inside and what it will mean one day when You reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over the whole earth, and then that merges into the eternal state and into Your everlasting Kingdom where all that is material and spiritual will forever be perfect. Father, we're

so grateful to be part. We thank You in Jesus' name. Amen.

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