Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

7 Characteristics of the Coming King, Part 3
Scripture: Luke 17:25-30
Code: 42-225

Well it was a number of years ago that I was preaching through the book of Romans here at the church and I came to romans chapter 9, 10 and 11 and I was determined that I wanted to be careful and precise and patient in going through those chapters because they are a battleground among theologians. Romans 9, 10 and 11 deal with the future of Israel and you take them at face value, they tell us there is a future salvation for the nation Israel, but there is a large element in evangelical Christianity historically and in the present that denies that hope for national Israel. So, I felt that in order to really understand that passage and unfold it verse by verse and word by word very carefully...I needed to go slowly. And so, not realizing just how slowly I'd go, it took me one entire year to go through Romans 9, 10 and 11. And I would say, honestly, about three months in the people were saying, "We get it, we give, please..." They were pleading for a therefore...the therefore comes in chapter 12 verse 1, "Therefore..." they wanted me to get to that therefore so badly. It just was a necessary exercise because there were so many issues related to the future of national Israel and to the prophetic promises of God laid out in the Old Testament, reiterated in the New Testament as well, regarding the future salvation of that covenant people of God. And I needed to deal with it in great detail and with great precision, knowing not only did we need to know it, but it needed to be set down for the record on tape and CD and also needed to show up in the commentary because that's such an important part of this great Roman epistle.

And so there are times when we come to texts of Scripture that we have to slow down a little bit and capture something and understand that we're dealing with something that may be a bit controversial and requires us to have great clarity on it. I feel a little bit like that going through Luke 17, however, it's not going to take us a year, it's just going to be this message and one more, so you'll have really nothing to complain about, but we have slowed down a little bit and we have done, I think, a handful of messages on this text, and could do, frankly, a lot more. And I am aware that when you get into prophetic passages, and we're talking here about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, that you get into things that are controversial, you get into things where people disagree. And the way you deal with that, first of all, is to apply to the text of Scripture the very same principles of interpretation that you would apply to any text, whether it's prophetic or whether it's narrative, or whether it's historical, or whether it's doctrinal, or whether it's polemical, whatever it is. Whether it's prose or poetry, whether it's an analogy, whether it's a parable, whatever it is, you interpret using the same principles of interpretation, you use the same principles of understanding language no matter what form or genre the text of Scripture takes. And so, the way you approach a passage that is prophetic that deals with the future, particularly in this case the Second Coming of Christ, is to apply the same principles of

interpretation.

Now, having done that, we will then uncover the revealed truth as much as has been revealed. That will also reveal to us that there is much that has not been revealed. No part of theology has as much mystery in it as that which deals with the future. There is no part of the Word of God that leaves us with more questions than those passages that deals with what has no yet happened. We understand then that we're going to be left with some mystery and that's fine. We don't want to leave, however, a true interpretation and get caught up in speculating in the category of mystery. We don't want to launch off the facts that are revealed in to fiction, or in to fantasy and start mingling those things. Neither do we want to say because we don't understand so much, we don't accept what is clear. We take what the Word of God says about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ exactly how we would take what the Word of God says about the first coming of Jesus Christ. We take as much as is here, we interpret it the clearest and simplest and straightforward way we can and you will find as we do that in this passage that it's clear, it's simple, it's unambiguous, it's understandable, it's comprehensible because the Lord wants us to know it. And what we don't know, we're happy not to know and leave with Him. And, in fact, He actually tells us, for the most part, what we don't know and we're glad to leave that with Him.

What we do know is this, the world will end with the return of Jesus Christ. There's so much speculation in the secular world today about what's happening to the planet. The environmentalists, of course, go absolutely crazy trying to protect and preserve this planet from everything they think attacks its viability in the future or shortens its potential life and therefore human existence. We have all kinds of scenarios that have been laid out for us about what might happen to this planet. We're finding ourselves reintroduced to the possibility of a man-induced nuclear war that could obliterate the planet in ways that people used to talk about during the cold war some decades ago. We also have the environmentalists who are warning us about the fact that we're going to destroy life on the planet by continually releasing pollutants into the ozone. We have those people who are looking into the sky through telescopes waiting for some asteroid to smash into the earth and break it into bits and send us into orbit forever. We have all these kinds of scenarios, some of them with some scientific elements and many of them very, very speculative. And I'm here to announce to the whole world and anybody who wants to listen, I can tell you exactly how it's going to end...exactly, because the Bible tells us specifically life on this planet as we know it and this planet as we know it and this universe as we know it will end with the return of Jesus Christ to earth. The literally, physical, bodily return of Jesus Christ who will come back in the same way that He left. And He left, as described in Acts chapter 1, while He was speaking with His disciples, ascending into heaven behind the clouds. And He'll come back in the same way.

Now the Bible repeats and repeats and repeats this fact of the Second Coming. The Bible gives us many descriptions of components and elements that occur around that great epoch event. There are a number of features to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is called a day, but it is a day because

it is a singular epoch but it has many components. It involves the Rapture of the church, followed by a period called the Tribulation, a seven-year period of judgment on the earth. The second three and a half years of that are escaladed judgment, fierce judgment, devastating judgment, culminating in the actual return of Christ to the earth with the redeemed saints who have been with Him in glory to destroy all the ungodly and to alter the earth as we know it and to establish His Kingdom for a thousand years. At the end of which, He will destroy the universe and in its place create a new heaven and a new earth which will last forever. The ungodly will spend forever in the Lake of Fire prepared for them and for the devil and the fallen angels. That entire scenario which sweeps from the Rapture through the seven-year Tribulation, through the thousand-year millennial Kingdom and culminates in the new heaven and the new earth, encompasses the great event of the return of Jesus Christ. And so the Bible fills all of that understanding with amazing detail. If you do not take that detail at face value as it is laid out in the Scripture using the normal approach to interpreting anything that you would interpret in an ancient document, implying the same principles of understanding, if you do not do that, if you say that it does not meant what it appears to mean in the normal sense of language, then we have absolutely no idea what it means. If it doesn't mean what it says, then whatever you say it means is meaningless to me because you would then have to have some secret insight into the mind of God when God Himself has not made it clear to anyone else.

So, we believe that God reveals His truth in order for us to understand. That's why the book of Revelation begins with a very, very simple, unmistakable sentence, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear, or understand, the words of the prophecy." You're blessed if you read it and understand it. How could you be blessed if you read it and didn't understand it? Blessing comes with reading and understanding. And so we can know many, many details, volumes can be written on the details. A two-volume commentary I wrote on Revelation is nearly a thousand pages just going through the details of the book of Revelation. You can go through the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 and you can go through the same Olivet Discourse in Luke 21 which we'll do in a little while, and Mark 13, and you can find the marvelous letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians and how importantly they look at the future. You can read Isaiah, and you can read Daniel, and you can read Ezekiel. You will find vast amounts of material looking down into the future and the glorious return of Christ. You can find it as well in the other prophetic writers of the Old Testament. There is an abundance of material, but nonetheless there is still an element of mystery about the future and the things we don't know about the future I suppose could be summed up in this simple way. We don't know when and we don't know why and we don't know how, we don't know exactly how this is all going to happen in detail. We don't know when it's going to happen. And we don't know who all the principle players are. We obviously know Christ is coming back, but apart from that, we don't know who is the Antichrist...who is the attending false prophet, who are the rulers and the kings who set themselves against the Christ and so forth as spoken of by the psalmist. We don't understand all of those elements. But that shouldn't surprise us because in 1 Peter 1 verses 10 and 11 Peter says the writers of the Old Testament didn't understand when and who either that they were writing about. They couldn't even imagine who the Messiah would be or when the Messiah would

come. So there are some elements of the Second Coming that we cannot really know for sure.

The one pervasive point of mystery that I must lay before you is this one. Listen to the words of Jesus in Mark 13:32 and 33, "Of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray for you do not know when the time is." And in Luke 12:40 you remember Jesus said, "Watch and be ready, for no one knows when the Son of Man is coming." The big mystery is when...when is this going to happen. And that mystery is a very helpful one. That is the great reality of what we call imminence. No one knows when this will begin. Nothing prophetic needs to happen before the Rapture of the church, that's the next event. It could happen any time. Nothing has to happen on the world scene before the Rapture of the church which will launch the series of events that will make up the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And so, we cannot know when it is going to happen. And the Lord then left us with this great doctrine of imminency. It could happen at any time...it could happen at any time so that every generation of Christians can live in the light of that anticipation.

Why would the Lord do that? Why would He want us to think it could happen at any moment? First John 3 tells us why, in that it says, "He who has this hope in him purifies himself." He who has this hope in him purifies himself. If you live as though Christ could come back at any moment, it has an impact on how you live. Jesus says in the book of Revelation, "Behold, I come quickly, or suddenly, and My reward is with Me to give to every man according to his work." I'm coming and when I come I will reward you based upon what I find you doing when I get there.

I can certainly identify with that. You can identify with that. Having an imminent on the surface, come at any moment authority such as the sovereign Lord Jesus Christ looming in front of you every waking moment of your life should have an impact on how you live your life. That's why we're told to watch and pray and occupy and to be ready for He could come at any moment. Even as a child, there were times when I hoped my parents did not show up. Can you identify with that? There were lots of times in school, those...the greatest times of my childhood education and I don't know why I was like this, was when the teacher left the room. And the worst times was when she came back suddenly and I didn't hear the pitter-patter of those orthopaedic wedges heading toward the door. We all understand what imminent arrival means in the sense of authority and accountability and responsibility. And that's how we're to live our Christians lives, knowing that the Lord could come at any moment. That is a purifying hope, and that is our hope. Paul says to Titus, "Looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

So we live with this mystery. We know a lot of the details of what is going to take place when He comes. We don't know, however, when it's going to begin. In fact, the Old Testament prophets who wrote weren't sure about the timing and the personages involved in these great events, neither can we be sure about them. One of the big points that, of course, the Old Testament prophets struggled with and even the Christians in the New Testament times struggled with was how could the Messiah

both suffer and be glorified? This was the struggle that Peter writes about in 1 Peter. They were trying to imagine how the Messiah could suffer and be glorified. How could He be the suffering servant and the reigning king. That was very difficult for them to harmonize. We now understand that better because the suffering part has happened historically and we're waiting for His final glory.

So when you approach a portion of Scripture that is prophetic, looks at the Second Coming, don't change any of the rules of interpretation. You accept it as you accept anything in the Word of God. You interpret it literally and the pattern for that is go back, look at all the prophecies that were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ. They were all fulfilled literally, historically the way the prophets laid them out and that's exactly the way the Second Coming prophecies will be fulfilled as well. So we take what Scripture says, use the same principles of interpretation as we use on anything else, avoid speculation, embrace the mystery and live every moment as if Christ could come in the next moment, knowing that we want to be found faithful and worthy when He arrives.

Now some of this abundant revelation in the Scripture about the events related to the Second Coming is given to us in Luke 17. In case you didn't know that, that was a transition sentence...so you can now open your Bible to Luke 17. And here we have one of those great portions of Scripture in which our Lord gives us details about His return. And as I've been telling you, these are not chronological verses. They're not laying out for us the sequence of events that make up that great event itself. This is rather a description of the nature of it, than the sequence of it. These are elements that are part of His Second Coming, critical for us to know. He defines the features of His Second Coming without getting involved in the sequence of things. And I gave you seven words that will sort of help us through this text.

One, Jesus' coming will be desired, visible, delayed, unexpected, revealing, divisive and deadly. And you remember, I told you the Jews were looking at the Second Coming as it was...as if it was going to be this great, happy, wonderful, glorious, fulfilling celebration of Christ's return and establishment of His Kingdom. And, of course, they would be at the very center of it all as the sons of Abraham. And Jesus is telling them something very different than what they expected, that when He comes it will be deadly, frightening, terrifying, destructive judgment for which you are warned and had better be ready. This was shocking to the Jews who had rejected Jesus, the Pharisees in particular, but I think it was also startling even to the disciples who anticipated a glorious Kingdom and not a Kingdom that was inaugurated with massive judgment.

Now let's look at the text. Verse 22, "He said to His disciples, 'The days shall come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man you will not see it.'" Jesus' coming will be desired by believers. We'll long for it, we'll hope for it, we live in this imminency. We say with John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Revelation. We will desire it, all believers will desire it, long for it, but not all will see it, of course.

Second point, Jesus' coming will be visible globally. They will say to you, false teachers will, false prophets and even false Christs, "Look there...look here...here's His coming over here...here's His coming over there...it happened then...it happened over here...it happened on that date...it's happening on this date in this place, that place. Do not go away...." that is don't go after that kind of misinformation. "Do not run after it, or after them." Why? "For just as the lightning when it flashes out of one part of the sky shines into the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day." Nobody's going to need to say, "Oh, it's over there...oh, it's over here...oh it was a private event...oh it was a secret event...oh you missed it over here." Everyone will know, it will be like lightning that covers the entire sky and is visible to everyone that can see. And our Lord is telling us here that not only will His coming be desired by those who believe, but it will be seen by everyone. Later on in this same account He says, "There are some who will be asleep when He comes, there will be some who will be awake, some in bed, some making bread. He'll come and whether it's at night or in the day, the whole world will know." It old you about Revelation where the world sees the stars fall, the sun go out, the moon go out, the sign of the Son of Man appears in the glory of heaven every eye will see Him...the Bible says...every eye will see Him. His coming will be visible globally and it will be terrifying. It will be not what they welcome but what they fear.

Thirdly, Jesus' coming will be delayed. It will be delayed and it will be delayed by rejection. Look at verse 25. "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." He must suffer many things, suffering meaning particularly His death which He suffered at the hands of Roman executioners but by the will of the Jewish nation and He suffered death also and more importantly at the hands of God by the determinate counsel of God as God's chosen sacrifice for sin. He cannot come until He suffers. This is part of His work. And by the way, that's why He's been saying that He must suffer again and again. You remember Luke 9:22...Luke 9:44...Luke 12 verse 50, Luke 13 verse 33. You'll see it again in Luke 18 verses 31 to 33, and again He reiterates it after His resurrection in Luke 24 that He had to suffer, He had to suffer. And the gospel preachers who go out in the book of Acts talk about how the Messiah had to suffer. He had to be the sacrifice for sin. So His coming will be delayed by His suffering, but also by...notice this carefully, verse 25, being rejected by this *genea*, this nation. He will be rejected by Israel. Now listen because this is a very important issue in eschatology. Jesus cannot return until Israel's rejection ends. Jesus cannot return until Israel's rejection ends.

Turn in your Bible over to the third chapter of Acts. In the third chapter of Acts, you're very early now, of course, into the church. The church is born in chapter 2. Christ has gone back to heaven. He's ascended. The feast of Pentecost has come. The Spirit has descended. The church has been established. Now the gospel begins to be preached. And in chapter 3 Peter is the preacher. And Peter, according to verse 12, speaks to the people and He says, "Men of Israel," He's talking to the Jews, and this is what He says to them, verse 14, "You disowned the holy and righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you." You remember that, right? Pilate offered them Jesus or

Barabbas and they took Barabbas instead of their Messiah. And verse 15, "But put to death the prince of life." A play on words. You killed the prince of life. So He indicts them for the crime against the Messiah, the One whom God raised from the dead. And that makes it crystal clear that they were on the opposite side from God...a fact to which we are witnesses. They were all, the Apostles, eyewitnesses of His resurrection.

Then He goes on to say, "On the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus that has strengthened this man whom you see and know," the man they had just healed there, "and the faith that comes through him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. Now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also, but the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled." That doesn't lessen their culpability, that doesn't lessen their guilt, that doesn't lessen their punishment for having rejected and executed the Son of God. But it did fit the purpose of God. God overrules the worst that men can do to accomplish the best that He can do. And so the simple point made here is, you Israelites killed your Messiah in the worst act of rejection in all your history. You have been guilty of killing the prophets and those that were sent to you throughout your history. And now you've done the worst, you've killed the Messiah. But in the midst of that, God accomplished His purpose in Christ's suffering.

Now verse 19 is what I want you to see. "Repent therefore and return to God...is the idea...that in order that your sins may be wiped away in order that times of refreshing may come in the presence of the Lord." That's a phrase that refers to the Kingdom.

The Kingdom will not come until you repent and turn to God. Why do...how do we know that? Let me take you back to verse 19 again. "In order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Namely, that He may send Jesus the Christ appointed for you. He can't send Jesus back until you repent and turn. As long as the nation Israel stays in unbelief, Jesus will not return. Verse 21 says, "Whom heaven must receive," and that is the present, He is there in heaven at the right hand of the Father, "Whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things." That's another term for the Kingdom. When everything is restored, paradise regained, "About which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." And He's referring to all the Old Testament prophecies about the Kingdom...all the Old Testament prophecies about the fulfillment of promises to Abraham and promises to David. It can't come until the Messiah suffers...that's been accomplished...and until the rejection of Israel ends. When they repent and they return and their sins are wiped away, just the way Zechariah lays it out in Zechariah 12:13 and 14, as I showed you last week, then the times of refreshing may come and then the Lord will send Jesus back to bring the period of restoration, the glorious Kingdom to a restored, rejuvenated planet where He reigns and fulfills all the promises to Abraham and David and reiterated through all the prophets.

Now with that in mind, go down to verse 25. "It is you...talking to the Israelites, men of Israel...it is you who are the sons of the prophets...listen to this...and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" God made a promise to Abraham that He would bless that nation Israel and through that nation Israel He would bless the world. God made a promise to Israel that He would make them a blessing and bless them. God made a salvation promise to Israel. Now one would maybe assume that when they rejected their Messiah, when they crucified their Messiah, when they spit on their Messiah, when they wanted nothing to do with their Messiah, when they turned their back on their Messiah, when they even rejected the obvious reality that He had risen from the dead and would not be convinced by unmistakable evidence that God would have said to them, "I'm done with you, it is over, that is the end, we're finished," and that's what Amillennialists believe, that it's over, that all the promises once laid before Israel are now fulfilled in the church and there is no more future for Israel. But I want you to go back to verse 25, it doesn't say, "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and were the sons of the covenant." It says, "You are the sons of the prophet and of the covenant." It is an irrevokable covenant. It is an unconditional covenant by which God promised to bless and save that nation to give them both salvation and a Kingdom and that covenant has not changed. But verse 26, "For you first, God raised up His servant." Did you hear that? Even after you killed Him, God raised Him for you first and sent Him to bless you by turning everyone of you from your wicked ways. The salvation opportunity was still open to Israel and the covenant was still in place by which God actually raised Jesus from the dead who had been placed on the cross by the will of the Jews to then bring about the salvation that would ultimately come to the nation Israel.

So, when Israel looks on Him whom they have pierced, mourns for Him as an only Son...in the words of Zechariah...understands what they have done, repents, returns to God, a fountain of cleansing will be open to them from God, Zechariah 13:1, and then God will send Jesus Christ. If you study the prophets carefully and you study what our Lord teaches carefully and you study the book of Revelation carefully, you will see that the salvation of Israel will happen in the future. Paul says it in Romans 9 to 11, clearly all Israel will be saved, the timing of that is in the middle of that period called the Tribulation...the middle of that period called the Tribulation. And while the judgments are being reeked out by the wrath of God on the world, at the same time Israel will be purged, two thirds of the Jews will be judged and purged out, one third will be saved, the nation will be redeemed. There will be two Jewish preachers the whole world will come to know in Revelation 11, there will be a hundred and forty-four thousand Jewish evangelists, twelve thousand from every tribe preaching the gospel all over the world. And Israel will come to faith. They will come to faith in the period called the Tribulation, the seventieth week of Daniel. Sixty-nine weeks ended at the time Messiah came and died. They will come to faith and once they come to faith, then the Kingdom will come when those judgments of God are finished. But the Kingdom cannot come until Israel believes. We're not...you say, "Aren't we waiting for the salvation of Israel?" The Rapture of the church comes first, we're caught up to be with the Lord in the air. And then as the judgments begin to fall in this world, in some of those judgments God brings judgment on the rebels of Israel but out of that rebellious nation, He

purifies a people for Himself and a hundred and forty-four thousand preachers who are Jews who will preach His gospel to the ends of the earth during that time while the precursors to the final judgment are actually going on warning men of greater judgment to come and calling them to repentance and salvation. When Israel comes to the point of faith, then Christ can return and set up His Kingdom.

Now, let me take you to a fourth point in Luke 17. A fourth point in Luke 17...Jesus' coming will be unexpected...it will be unexpected. Listen to this, verse 26, "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man. 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. 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. But on the day that Lot went out from Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." This is telling us some very, very important things about people's attitudes and life at the time when the Lord comes in judgment. This isn't looking at the Rapture of the church, this is looking at the devastating return of Christ in judgment. In the days of the Son of Man...days, plural, not just the one great epoch but the days, sequence of events, the components that make up that return, in the period, you might say, just before He comes to judge and establish His Kingdom, in that period that we call the Tribulation period, it's going to be life like it was in Noah's day. It's going to be life like it was in Lot's day. It's going to be circumstances like in Noah's day and Lot's day, judgment like in Noah's day and Lot's day and deliverance like in Noah's day and Lot's day.

What am I saying? Think about it. How was it in the days of Noah? How was it in the day of Lot? Let me just give you a little quick reminder. Genesis 6, 7 and 8 records the Flood that drown the entire world, the days of Noah. There were millions of people alive at that time. Since creation, you remember, before the Flood, people lived a long time. They lived nearly a thousand years. Plenty of time to proliferate massive families which would then proliferate and fill the earth very rapidly. When the great Flood came, it drowned the entire world of millions of people and spared only Noah, his wife, their three sons and three wives...eight people survived. That was it, that's the record of Genesis 6, 7 and 8.

In Genesis chapter 19 you have the story of God's destruction of the city of Sodom and another city, Gomorrah, and other cities of the plain out at the south end of the Dead Sea. They were all buried under molten lava, fire and brimstone. It was a holocaust from which only three people were delivered...Lot and his two daughters, not even his wife survived because of her sin. So that's the factors that we have to keep in mind as we recall the story of Noah and the story of Lot.

Now how do we define the days of Noah? Well let me just give you a simple definition. They were wicked days. In fact, in Genesis 6:5 it says that all the imagination or the intent of the hearts of man was only evil continually. They were vile. They were evil. Evil was rampant. Evil was dominant. Evil

was singular. It was such a wretched and evil period of time that demon-possessed men were ravaging women. It was a culture of demonic possession and it was a culture of sexual abandonment and all manner of wretchedness. So vile that God drowned the entire world.

How was it in the days of Lot? Lot lived in a city called Sodom. We have a word today called sodomy. We know exactly what that means. That is a homosexual sin. That is a vile kind of behavior drawn out of that city in the plains south of the Dead Sea. What did God do to Sodom? Buried Sodom under fire and brimstone completely. What kind of people lived in Sodom? Read the nineteenth chapter of Genesis and find that when two angels came to visit Lot, the men of that city tried to rape the angels. And when God blinded the men of that city, they still tried to feel their way to smash down the door to get to those angels. That was a vile, wretched place.

So the first thing you know about the days of Noah and the days of Sodom is that they were days of wretched, vile, massive, sweeping, consummate evil. And that's the way it will be in the days when the Son of Man comes. There's no room in this for an A...a post-millennial view. There's no room in this for the world getting better and better and better and better. It is not going to get better. It didn't get better before the judgment fell in Noah's day and it didn't get better before the judgment fell in Lot's day. I don't know how anybody can be a post-millennialist with that clear teaching of Scripture. It's going to get worse and worse. Evil men grow worse and worse...says the Word of God. Evil men grow worse and worse.

There's another very important thing to keep in mind. As you read the book of Revelation, when we get to this world, evil is going to be rampant because hell is going to open up and belch out a force of demons that have been kept captive for a while. There are some temporarily bound demons who are going to be released from their place of being bound in the pit. Read the ninth chapter of Revelation. They are belched out of hell and they run amuck across the earth. In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 6 and 7 we also read that up until that future time the Spirit of God restrains evil in the world. The Spirit of God is called the restrainer, He restrains evil, He holds back evil. When Romans 1 takes effect and God abandons society, that restraint is lessened. But in the future, it will be removed, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:6 and 7, the restrainer will no longer restrain so you have hell belching forth demons who heretofore had been bound do their damage in the world and you have the restrainer pulling back all restraint and letting evil run its maximum level. So the description of that world is a kind of evil that is the unfolding of what the Bible calls the mystery of lawlessness which heretofore has been kept in check so we didn't know what it looked like in its full expansion, but he mystery will no longer be a mystery in that day. So it will be like the day of Noah and like the day of Lot in the massive consuming widespread evil of the world.

It will also be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot in that judgment will come suddenly...judgment will come suddenly. It came suddenly in the days of Noah. The door was shut on the ark and it began to rain and the flood drowned the whole world and they had no hope. It came

suddenly in the days of Lot, Lot was taken out of the city, his two daughters went with him, they escaped and as soon as he was gone, the city perished. You can see it in the text here if you would look, you see in verse 27, "Noah entered the ark and the flood came." You see it in verse 29, "Lot went out from Sodom and it rained fire and brimstone." It comes fast, it comes immediate, it comes inescapably and it comes devastatingly.

And I would just add as a footnote to this as well, before...here's another parallel at the end...when the day of the Lord comes, it's coming that day of the Lord, that final horrible deadly judgment, it's coming at a day and an hour. They know the general time period, we can see the prophetic clock in the Tribulation so they know but they don't know the day and they don't know the hour. So when it comes, it comes suddenly and it comes devastatingly and it comes deadly and it's too late. That parallel is there as well.

But I want you to notice something else. There's an analogy here that is very helpful. Before the Flood, Noah is taken into safety in an ark. Before the fire and brimstone, Lot and his daughters are taken to safety on a mountain. And before the unfolding of judgment, believe me, God will rescue His own. And the ark of safety is the Rapture of the church, the gathering together of His own and then the judgment begins to be poured out. And even those that are converted during the time of the Tribulation, they will be rescued from that judgment and we'll see that in our study next time, how that they are secured in the midst of judgment. But it's an analogy of the Rapture. Noah and his family are caught away, then comes the judgment. Lot and his daughters are caught away, then comes the judgment. In the future, the redeemed and the beloved of the Lord are caught away in those marvelous Rapture passages, we have no hint of judgment, John 14, 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 15, were caught away and then comes judgment. It is a time of entire devastation. When you have the earth flooded, it is entirely devastated. When you have the area of the cities of the plain buried under fire and brimstone, it is a time of entire devastation. And when the Lord Jesus comes, He will so devastate this earth that He has to reshape it. This isn't the final new heaven and new earth, but He reconstitutes it in a Edenic like restoration, that's why it's called the times of restoration in Acts 3 as I read to you.

So there are parallels for the time of Noah, the time of Lot and the time of the coming of the Son of Man. It will be so devastating, so terrifying, so fast that it will sweep the ungodly away. But there's one other component. It will come after a time of warning. Noah, according to 2 Peter, is a preacher of righteousness. He is called by Peter a preacher of righteousness. Lot is identified to us as that righteous Lot. Lot was a righteous man. Peter says Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

So what do we know? We know that before the judgment came, righteous men like Lot warned people, righteous men like Noah...Noah for 120 years while he's building an object lesson of what's going to happen and building a boat in the middle of the desert where there is no water and there's never been anything like rain, is giving a sermon of judgment and it's there every day for everyone to

see for 120 years. The judgment of God will only fall after a time of warning. During the time of the Tribulation, the first warning will be the church removed, what happened? How's the world going to understand what happened? That's a huge reality to try to deal with. That doesn't mean people won't still go to church. I'm afraid that most of the people who were part of the visible church won't be gone in the Rapture, so church will go on which will confuse the world to some degree, but it's still an issue to be answered. Then you have judgments starting to fall. But as those judgments start to fall, the gospel will be preached. It will be preached by two witnesses, Revelation 11, who the whole world will see killed in the city of Jerusalem and then they'll rise from the dead and everybody will see it because it will be on CNN and Fox News and everywhere else. Then 144 thousand Jews are converted, they become evangelists, they're sealed so they can be protected from the deadly threats of Antichrist. They'll cover the world. They'll preach the gospel. So many people will be saved from every tongue and tribe and nation that they can't even be numbered. The gospel will be preached by an angel in heaven, will fly through heaven preaching the gospel from space. That's amazing. I don't think that's a satellite dish, folks, that's an angel flying in heaven. Something far more supernatural. The gospel will be preached everywhere and the warning of judgment will be given again and again and again and again and again during that period of time. So as it was in the days of Noah when righteousness and judgment were being preached by Noah, in the days of Lot when righteousness and judgment were declared and testified by Lot, so it will be in that day that the gospel and the warnings of judgment will be preached in that day. The parallels then are striking when you think about the coming of Christ.

And then finally, that brings us to the text itself at which point we close. They will be in the future days marked by the same kind of indifference that the days of Noah and Lot were marked by. They were eating. They were drinking. They were marrying. They were being given in marriage. Nothing wrong with any of that, life as usual. You eat, you drink, you have marriages, make families...life as usual. They did it in the days of Noah in spite of the judgment warnings, in spite of the preachings of righteousness. They did the same thing in Lot's day, verse 28, they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building. Nothing sinful about that, that's just life as usual. And that's the amazing thing. They carried on life as usual before the Flood. They carried on life as usual before the holocaust of fire and brimstone. And they will in the middle of all these precursors to the day of the Lord, all these horrific judgments coming out of the seals, the trumpets and the bowls in Revelation, in the middle of all of that with their world collapsing around them, with the tides changing because the moon is changed, with the sea turned to blood, with fresh water being poisoned, with crops dying, with stars in the sky being rearranged, with a third of the population of the world dying, a fourth of the population of the world dying, all these things going on, they're still trying to carry on life as usual because that's all they know, ignoring the warnings, ignoring the heavenly preachers, the earthly preachers, the miraculous resurrection of the two witnesses...they just carry on life as usual.

That's the way it's going to be in the time of the coming of the Son of Man. This is the pattern that we need to understand because this is what the Lord has given us. It's horrific to think about it. How

could the world seeing judgment falling all around them, how could the world hearing supernatural preachers preaching the gospel still reject? In fact, in the book of Revelation they actually shake their fist at God, curse Him because they know it's coming from Him. The world goes on with its busy routines. The world goes on engulfed in its sin. The world rejects all the warnings, all the messages. Jesus said it, we learned it, didn't we, in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, "If they don't believe Moses and the prophets, they wouldn't believe though someone was...what?...raised from the dead."

Now, next time we're going to see the final three characteristics of His time of return. Let's pray.

Father, we are stunned by all of this, we are in awe of it. But we do know there's one other thing. As it was in the days of Noah, eight souls were saved. As it was in the days of Lot, three souls were saved. As it will be in the final days of the Son of Man, there will be a massive revival. Israel will be saved, innumerable number of Gentiles will be saved. It will be the greatest sweeping salvation of humanity in redemptive history. We thank You for that. We feel like John who when taking in all of this says it was sweet and bitter, sweet because of the salvation, sweet because of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, sweet because of the destruction of the ungodly and bitter because of the tragedy of eternal damnation to the souls of men and women. And we have that same bitter/sweet taste even now as we contemplate this massive event which will happen and perhaps begin in our lifetime. May everyone here be ready for the upward call to be gathered to Christ, to come back with Him not to be judged but to reign in His Kingdom which will be an everlasting Kingdom. We thank You for the grace that has brought us into this invisible Kingdom and will one day usher us into the visible Kingdom. We give all the glory to our King and our Lord, Jesus Christ...in whose name we pray. Amen.

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