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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?”

Luke 17:20-37

{Calvin Miller} **“The world is coming to... a beginning.”** You did not expect that, did you?!

○ {1 Co 7:31; 1 Th 4:16; Rev 21:4; 2 Pe 3:10} Yes, **“This world in its present form” “[is passing] away.”** It will end when **“the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command.” “The heavens will disappear with a roar,” “the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.”**

○ {Rev 20:15, 14} This cataclysmic end will be hellish for some, since **“All whose names [are] not found written in [God’s] book of life [will be] thrown into the lake of fire.” “The lake of fire is the second death,”** eternal death.

○ {Eph 6:12; Rev 11:15} Yet Scripture reveals that “The Day of the Lord” will not bring about only a termination, but also a transition. As **“this dark world”** is swept aside,

“The kingdom of the world [will] become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.”

○ {Rev 21:2, 1, 3} God Almighty gave John a vision of **“the Holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven,”** integrating the **“new heaven and new earth”** where God **“will dwell with [his] people.”**

○ {Rev 21:4; 1 Co 15:52-53} The Holy City will be a place of infinite glory, beauty, peace, and joy. **“There will be no**

more death or mourning or crying or pain”: **“The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.”**

○ {Rev 21:4} So although **“The old order of things”** is doomed our greater confession is (to quote Calvin Miller) that **“The world is coming to... a beginning.”**

? *How then shall we live?*

☛ The most urgent thing is to make sure our names are inscribed in the book of life.

○ {Jn 14:6; Ro 6:5; Mt 16:24-25} Jesus declares: **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** For **“if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will ... also be united with him in a resurrection like his.”**

If you have not yet united with the Son in his cross, do so today! Please, grab me or someone else after the service and we will pray with you.

? {Eph 2:8} But being saved **“by grace... through faith”** in Messiah is not the finish line; it is the starting line. Knowing (as we do) that **“The world is coming to... a beginning,”** *how then shall we live?*

Please turn with me to Luke 17:11-19.

■ In verses 20-21 the Pharisees ask **“when the kingdom of God [will] come.”** Jesus replies, **“The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”**

○ {Rev 1:7} Elsewhere, it is prophesied that **“‘He is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see**

him, even those who pierced him’.” The Day of the LORD will be observable, and impossible to miss!

- {1 Co 15:24-25} However, it will *not* inaugurate the kingdom; rather, it *will* mark its completion. Christ “**must reign until**” – not “*when*,” “*until*” – “**he has put all his enemies under his feet. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to [his] Father.**”

- {Mt 4:17; Lk 7:22-23} Jesus has preached the kingdom’s nearness from the start. When the Baptizer asked for proof of kingship, Jesus answered: “**The blind receive sight, the lame walk, [the lepers] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the [Gospel] is proclaimed to the poor.**” And still the Pharisees ask when the kingdom will come!

- {Lk 5:31; 11:38; 6:7} How can they be so blind? They are looking for a realm of absolute compliance with their non-biblical social, ritual and ethical laws. But Jesus “[eats] **and [drinks] with tax collectors and sinners,**” neglects ritual washings, and “[heals] **on the Sabbath.**” Hence they neither recognize him as Prince of Peace, King of kings and Lord of Lords, nor do they see the kingdom right in front of their eyes.

All Christians confess faith in Jesus, yet many who call him “Lord” act as though his reign won’t begin till the 2nd Coming. They expect him to accomplish personal salvation in the here and now, but little more.

They have eyes to clearly perceive the deepening darkness of “**this world in its present form,**” but not the brilliance of God’s kingdom that is taking shape. As a result they are plagued by fear, anger, cynicism, and despair.

It does not have to be this way. The world is coming to an end and a beginning!

- ✍ How then shall we live? We shall live in faith!

- Faith that God’s “**kingdom...is in [our] midst!**”!

- {Php 1:6} Faith that God has in fact “[begun] a **good work in [us]**” and that he “**will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**”

- {Lk 4:18-19} Faith that where Christ followers proclaim “**good news to the poor,**” preach “**freedom for the prisoners,**” announce “**recovery of sight for the blind,**” “**set the oppressed free,**” and “[herald] the [time] of the Lord’s favor,” the kingdom is there!

- Moving on to Luke 17:22-25:

Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.”

- A few individuals actually identify themselves as the Messiah, or at least a manifestation of his Spirit. First John 2:18 warns: “**you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.**” How many others have come since the first century?!

○ {Mt 24:36} Others make highly specific announcements about the End, even to the point of saying they know the precise time of Christ's Return. This, in direct contradiction of his teaching that **"no one knows" "that day or hour"!**

Only a tiny percentage of preachers go that far; but many claim undue authority and even direct inspiration for questionable teachings. In the process they expose the Church to ridicule and they make legitimate doctrine unpalatable to many Christians.

○ {Mt 28:19; 22:39; 25:35-36} Not only so they divert people's attention and energy away from the kingdom. It is hard to **"make disciples"** of Jesus when you are busy converting others to your particular End Times –ism! It is hard to **"Love your neighbor as yourself"** by giving them food, drink, hospitality, clothing, and care when your priority is to avoid sinners and batten down the hatches until the rapture!

It does not have to be this way. The world is coming to an end and a beginning!

✎ How then shall we live? We shall live in love!

○ {Mic 6:8} Love for God and others enacted in justice, mercy, and humility.

○ {Jas 1:27; Zech 7:10} Love for God and others that serves the spiritual and material interests of orphans, widows, aliens, and the poor.

○ {Mt 5:9; 6:39; 6:44} Love for God and others made real in peace-making, cheek turning and prayer.

○ {Mt 5:6; 28:19-20; Jas 1:27} Love for God and others that energizes our redemptive and evangelistic engagement in the world even as we pursue righteousness and purity.

■ Now Luke 17:26-27: **"As it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all."**

■ Verses 28-29 record the parallel illustration of Lot and Sodom. Picking it up again in verse 30 we read:

"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the housetop, with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

○ {2 Pe 3:4} Indifference about the Day of the Lord causes as much damage as obsession with it. How many will be **"thrown into the lake of fire"** because they say, **"Where is this 'coming' he promised? Everything goes on as it has since the beginning"?**

○ {1 Co 3:12-15} How many others will enter eternal life by the skin of their teeth? What we build on the foundation of Christ **"will be shown for what it is,**

because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, [which] will test the quality of [our] work” – whether it is “**gold, silver,**” and “**costly stones**” (the stuff of New Earth) or “**wood, hay or straw**” (the stuff of Old Earth). “**If what [we have] built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, [we] ...will be saved**” but we “**will suffer loss – as one escaping through the flames.**”

It does not have to be this way. The world is coming to an end and a beginning!

✈ How then shall we live? We shall live in hope!

○ {1 Jn 3:3} Hope in Christ’s appearing that inspires us to “**purify [ourselves] ...as he is pure.**”

○ {Php 4:7; 1 Th 5:8} Hope in Christ’s appearing by which he will “**guard [our] ...minds**” as we wear the “**hope of salvation [like] a helmet.**”

○ {2 Co 1:6; 2 Ti 4:5; 2 Th 1:4} Hope in Christ’s appearing which enables “**patient endurance of... sufferings,**” “**hardship,**” and “**trials.**”

○ {Eph 5:16} Hope in Christ’s appearing that induces us to “[seize] **every opportunity,**” fruitfully stewarding the gifts with which has entrusted us.

⊛ “**The world is coming to a beginning.**” Shall we not live in faith, love, and hope while we wait?!