

# DISCIPLES LONG FOR JESUS'S COMING

## + SESSION OUTLINE

1. Christ's followers recognize that God's kingdom is here in part (Luke 17:20-21).
2. Christ's followers anticipate that God's kingdom is coming in full (Luke 17:22-35).
3. Christ's followers work for God's kingdom to be known by all (Matt. 24:45-51).

Background Passages: Matthew 24; Luke 17

## + WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

God's kingdom is present today and will be established in full when Christ returns.

## + HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

All who have trusted in Christ are part of His church, living under God's rule as King today while waiting for Christ's return to establish the kingdom in full. As such, the church's mission is to proclaim salvation through Christ to the world so that others might be part of the coming kingdom as well.

## + HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have come to know God as our good and perfect King, we live joyfully and obediently under His reign, proclaiming Christ to the world so that others might enter into the kingdom.

# GROUP TIME

NOTES



## SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.

## INTRODUCTION

**SETTING:** Sometimes we can wonder when things are ever going to change. If Jesus's disciples live according to the values, norms, and conditions of the kingdom, and if they are going to the lost with the good news, then when will the arrival of the kingdom come? Shouldn't we see a more dramatic impact than what is going on today? Since the kingdom is going to come differently than expected (Matt. 13), Jesus prepares us for the arrival of the kingdom as both already among us and not yet fully here.

**EXPLAIN:** The Bible tells us Jesus will return at the end times, and then the kingdom of God will be fully established, which will include judgment on those who have rejected Christ.

**DISCUSS: What are some reasons Christians hesitate to talk about judgment?** (people can feel that it is mean or rude to talk about difficult things like the end of the world; the topic can seem distant and remote from people's everyday experience and so there is a temptation to feel like you may appear weird or sound crazy; others want to avoid the topic because so many people have disagreed about what will happen at the end and they feel uncertain about how to communicate about Christ's return in an effective and helpful way)

**TRANSITION:** Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is already here but it has not yet been fully established, which will occur at Jesus's return. In the Gospels, Jesus shared what that will be like.

# POINT 1

## CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS RECOGNIZE THAT GOD'S KINGDOM IS HERE IN PART (LUKE 17:20-21).

NOTES

**20** Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, **21** nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 17:20-21** from his or her own Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 20-21A** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Unlike the expectations of the Jews, the kingdom of God was not **ushered** in by grand triumphs but by the birth and **ministry** of Jesus.

**DISCUSS:** In what ways do you long for the kingdom of God? (people may long for the liberation from the effects of the curse—disease, death, destruction, injustice, and evil; others may express a longing for happiness and joy where sorrow and mourning are gone; some may express that they long for the day when they are freed from sin; others may talk about the Lord’s Prayer—that they pray for God’s kingdom to come and His will to be done)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSE 21B** commentary to emphasize the idea that the church and the kingdom are related (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

**KEY DOCTRINE #77: Church and Kingdom:** The church and the kingdom of God are closely related, though not identical. When the Bible speaks of the kingdom of God, it is referring to the **reign** of God in the world. The church is the people of God who live under His loving rule now, anticipating the full manifestation of God’s kingdom in the future. The church’s **mission** is to witness to God’s kingdom, proclaiming God’s message of salvation through Christ and demonstrating the power of the **gospel** through good works so that others may be brought to live under God’s reign.

**TRANSITION:** While there are signs that the kingdom of God is already among us, we still wait for the fullness of the kingdom to come. The longing for a day without sin, sorrow, suffering, and sadness is evidence that we long for eternity in our hearts.

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 20-21A** / In Jesus's day, the Jewish people hoped and expected that the Messiah would come and immediately usher in a new era where the totality of the kingdom would come. The Messiah would come and bring an end to all oppression and evil. The desert would blossom, justice would be restored, people would be healed, and the redeemed of the Lord would return to Zion with singing. This is what Isaiah told the people who were experiencing trials of political pressure around them. Isaiah 35 foretold of a renewed land of promise.

Deep down in the human heart, people know that we were not meant to live with sorrow, death, and decay. We long for a world where the wrongs are made right, where people live in peace, and where joy and happiness abound.

The Pharisees wanted to know when the kingdom of God would come. Since the people of Israel lived under Roman occupation, the Jews were longing for the restoration of their homeland. Some longed for the days of political rule, others were longing for the spiritual rule of the King, but everyone waited for the renewal of all things that the Old Testament had foretold.

The expectation that God's kingdom will come with some renewal of government or speculating upon the signs of the times have always been common. But the kingdom cannot be predicted with end times charts or with set dates. Jesus said, **"The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed."** It will not come so that someone can say, "See, here it is!" or "There's proof!" Jesus said the kingdom would not come with signs that people are looking for. It is not predictable, it cannot be controlled by human planning, nor can human wisdom determine the plans in the mind of God.

Jesus taught His disciples to pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Human hearts desire and long for a renewed world

where God's rule and reign are established, and that is what Jesus taught us to pray.

**VERSE 21B** / In response to the Pharisees, Jesus told them that the kingdom of God was right in front of them—it is **"in the midst of you,"** if they would have eyes to see and ears to hear. Because the kingdom of God is God's people living in God's place under God's rule, the kingdom of God is already present in the lives of those who trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Jesus said that the kingdom of God is in the midst of the Pharisees. Some have translated this passage to say that the kingdom of God is among you or within you. What makes the kingdom of God present is the reality of Jesus's presence and power in bringing salvation to the world. Jesus told a teacher of Israel, Nicodemus, that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God. Rather, a person enters the kingdom of God through faith in the Son of God. It begins with an inner transformation of the heart through faith, and it continues to work in our midst as Christ is proclaimed.

Jesus demonstrated that the kingdom of God was breaking into this world. Through His preaching, He proclaimed the message of the kingdom (cf. Luke 8:1). When performing miracles, Jesus said that the kingdom of God was on display (11:20). If people wanted signs, Jesus pointed out that the year of the Lord's favor that Isaiah foresaw (Isa. 61:1-2) had come: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news (Matt. 11:5).

There will never be enough evidence for an unbelieving heart to see the kingdom. Jesus had come, in all humility, as the King of kings. Unless one trusts in Christ as the Savior who frees people from sin and death, no sign will ever be sufficient for an unbelieving heart.

# POINT 2

## CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS ANTICIPATE THAT GOD'S KINGDOM IS COMING IN FULL (LUKE 17:22-35).

**22** And he said to the disciples, “The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. **23** And they will say to you, ‘Look, there!’ or ‘Look, here!’ Do not go out or follow them. **24** For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. **25** But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. **26** Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. **27** They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. **28** Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, **29** but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— **30** so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. **31** On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. **32** Remember Lot’s wife. **33** Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. **34** I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. **35** There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left.”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 17:22-35** from his or her own Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 22-25** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Jesus had to suffer and die so He could resurrect and ascend to heaven to one day **return** in a sudden and **obvious** manner.

**DISCUSS: What are some unhelpful ways people have speculated about Christ’s return?** (setting dates and falsely predicting the future; trying to live in a bubble, solely waiting and not serving others; disregarding it altogether)

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 26-35** commentary to emphasize the following idea (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Jesus **warns** His disciples to be alert and ready for His return, anticipating **judgment** coming.

**DISCUSS: From Day 5 in the DDG: How are you working as you actively wait for Christ’s return?** (sharing the gospel with others; not holding to things of this world tightly; serving God and others; not holding grudges but forgiving others)

### NOTES

### SODOM

A city in Canaan during Abraham’s time, possibly at the southern end of the Dead Sea. Lot, Abraham’s nephew, and his family moved there, but its inhabitants were so immoral and wicked that God couldn’t find even ten righteous men (Gen. 18:22-32). The city was thus judged, with its neighboring town Gomorrah, and destroyed with fire.

### VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“At the end time of the world, he will not descend from heaven obscurely or secretly, but with godlike glory.”<sup>1</sup>

—Cyril of Alexandria (c. 375–444)

## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 22-25** / Jesus taught His disciples what they needed to know about the coming kingdom so that they would be ready for its arrival. Jesus knew that His disciples would be wondering when He would return. So Jesus made it clear that there would be several key events that must take place before His return.

First, Jesus said that He must **“suffer many things and be rejected by this generation”** (17:25). This refers to Jesus’s death on the cross. He made it clear that the kingdom would come through His own people’s rejection of Him (John 1:11), leading to His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus first had to die for sinners, redeeming those who would trust in Him. And as the disciples told others about Jesus’s death and resurrection, the kingdom would grow. By coming in the flesh and starting His ministry, Jesus had brought the kingdom in part, but the kingdom had not yet fully arrived. That would come, Jesus explained, at His second coming.

The Son of Man will return in a sudden and obvious way, like **“lightning flashes”** across the sky. Jesus’s return will be evident to all. Speculation, rumors, and uncertainty that He may be here or there will be so obviously false to all disciples (17:24), though some still claimed to have information. In Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians, false teachers tried to say that they had missed Jesus’s return (cf. 2 Thess. 2:1-3). But in Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel prophesied that the Son of Man would come upon the clouds and would be given dominion and glory. Also, in the book of Revelation, the apostle John stated that He saw Christ riding on a cloud, and every eye would see Him (Rev. 1:7). By His death on the cross, Jesus purchased for Himself a people from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9). So when He returns, He will gather them to Himself (Rev. 7:9) in an obvious way.

**VERSES 26-35** / Jesus then gave two Old Testament examples to describe how the kingdom will arrive suddenly, and how terrible the coming judgment will be for those who have not trusted in Him. It took Noah one hundred years to build the ark according to God’s instructions, and the people around him went about their lives without any thought for tomorrow (Luke 17:27). When the Lord sent the rain, Noah, his family, and the animals inside the ark were rescued, but the **“flood came and destroyed”** the rest of the world in judgment. Similarly, the people of Sodom were going about their everyday lives when the fire of the Lord descended upon the city and only Lot and his family were spared.

Jesus said His appearing will be sudden and without warning: people will not have time to pack a quick bag, nor will a worker who is out in the fields have time to rush home (Matt. 24:17-18; Mark 13:15-16). The judgment will be swift and immediate. While Matthew and Mark warn of the coming judgment on Jerusalem, Luke communicated that Jesus was not only referring to the coming judgment of the temple in AD 70 but also to the judgment at the end of the age. One day, it will be too late to turn away from sin.

To highlight how critical it is not to turn back to an old way of life, not to hesitate, and not to live without urgency, Jesus simply said, **“Remember Lot’s wife”** (Luke 17:32; cf. Gen. 19:26). Lot’s family had been warned by the angels not to look back nor stop as they fled Sodom. Lot’s wife, however, looked back, and her judgment was instant. She was longing for the past as well as not seeing the urgency to obey and move.

For now, God graciously has provided a way of salvation—whoever gives up his life and submits to Christ will be saved from the final judgment and not be **“left”** behind (vv. 34-35). As disciples of Christ, then, we are to anticipate Jesus’s coming as if it could happen tomorrow but live out our lives in service to the kingdom as we wait.

# POINT 3

## CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS WORK FOR GOD'S KINGDOM TO BE KNOWN BY ALL (MATT. 24:45-51).

**45** “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? **46** Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. **47** Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. **48** But if that wicked servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed,’ **49** and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, **50** the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know **51** and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read aloud **Matthew 24:45-51** from his or her own Bible.

**EXPLAIN:** Use the **VERSES 45-47** commentary to highlight the following point (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

Waiting for Jesus's return, we continue to live **faithful** lives in **service** to the King and kingdom.

**DISCUSS: What are the marks of a faithful and wise servant who follows Christ?** (they are doing the work of their Master; they are obeying Christ's commands; they are seeking to take the message of the King's authority to forgive sins and cleanse hearts to those around them; they are not passive about their faith but are working for the good of those around them to know Christ)

**EXPLAIN:** Use **PACK ITEM 3: HEARING THE OLD IN THE NEW** and the **VERSES 48-51** commentary to emphasize that from the Old Testament to the New, judgment has always been a reality for the enemies of God (*the bold words fill in blanks in the DDG*):

**Judgment** will come to those who don't live with faithfulness and **expectancy** of Christ's return.

**DISCUSS: Why is it easy for some to think Christ won't come back in their lifetime?** (He hasn't come back yet, so people may think they still have a long time to wait; they want to hold onto the pleasures of their life; they want to hold onto their relationships, like seeing their kids grow up; they want more time on this earth)



## COMMENTARY

**VERSES 45-47** / Since no one knows the day or the hour when Christ will return, it is critical to be ready. Every believer will have to account for his or her life before the Lord. Following Jesus's call to be ready in Matthew 24:44, Jesus told a parable of what it would look like to be ready for His return.

Jesus set the story: a master was looking for a servant to appoint as a leader over his household while he was away for an extended period of time. This wealthy master had many servants, so he sought a **“faithful and wise servant,”** one who could be trusted to do what the master would want done with his household.

As a result of his faithful work while his master was away, the servant was **“blessed”** upon his master's return. The word “blessed” was used to describe kingdom disciples in Matthew 5:3-10, and it is used to describe the favor the servant receives for his faithful service in his master's absence.

The servant did not spend his time looking for his master or wondering what should be done. He knew what his master expected and he obeyed. Just as the servant was blessed upon his master's return, so those disciples who work for their Lord while they wait for His return are faithful and wise, and they display God's blessing upon their lives. Jesus reiterated the idea that faithful servants will be entrusted with greater authority and responsibility.

Jesus told His disciples to take the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. This task remains unfinished. Christians have been working to bring the gospel to every people group in every corner of the world. Whether we go across the street or around the world, our task remains the same as it did two thousand years ago: to prepare for Christ's return by sharing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

**VERSES 48-51** / The next verses describe a wicked servant, one who is unfaithful and lacks wisdom (see v. 45). Jesus

is not describing the same servant in verses 45-47. Rather, these are two servants with completely opposite behaviors and attitudes. The wicked servant presumed his master was going to stay away for a long time and showed his true colors when the master left. Jesus described the wicked servant as violently abusing his authority against his fellow servants and partying with drunkards—eating and drinking what belonged to his master.

When the master returned home, he undoubtedly surprised the wicked servant and caught him off guard. The punishment he received seems quite severe: to be cut in pieces. He was then cast **“with the hypocrites”** because he had pretended to be faithful when he was not. This fierce judgment was intended to jolt the listener into action. Jesus had repeatedly called the religious leaders of His day “hypocrites” (see Matt. 23), implying that “the wicked servant” was not merely one in the parable but those who were also in Israel's leadership.

Jesus described the final destination of the wicked servant and hypocrites as a place of **“weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** Matthew has used this phrase in Jesus's teaching on several occasions (cf. 8:12; 13:42,50; 22:13; 25:30). This is the final judgment that all those who refuse to ready themselves for their Master's return will face. Jesus's point is clear: He will come in an unexpected time, and when He comes, He will bring judgment for those who have not acted faithfully and lived with the expectation that He will return.

While the wicked servant foolishly thought that the master would never catch him abusing his fellow servants and indulging his own pleasure, the listener would probably have surmised his fate. Yet many of us, even Christians, forget that Jesus's second coming will be like the master's sudden return—this time bringing judgment on all evildoers and blessings for those He finds faithful.



# MY RESPONSE

Because we have come to know God as our good and perfect King, we live joyfully and obediently under His reign, proclaiming Christ to the world so that others might enter into the kingdom.

## HEAD:

At Jesus's first coming, He brought the kingdom of God to this world. Through His teaching and miracles, He showed us that He will make all things new (Rev. 21:5). While the kingdom has already come, we still see that evil exists, so we wait for Jesus to rule and reign fully and to conquer evil completely so that no enemy is left to oppose Him.

**How do we explain to others how evil still exists even as the kingdom is here?**

## HEART:

The kingdom of God has broken into this world, and all who trust Christ are brought into His kingdom and live under God's authority as King. But the kingdom will come in fullness one day, so we ought to live with a sense of urgency to take Christ to people around us so that they might believe and be part of the kingdom of God.

**What are things we can praise God for regarding the good works He is doing through the kingdom today?**

## HANDS:

Christ's kingdom has come to us because He has saved us. We know that everything that God rules is for our good, so we live under His authority with joy and obedience so that our actions back up the words that we speak about the hope of Jesus Christ. As our words and deeds reflect Christ's rule and reign, we seek to persuade others to come into the kingdom of Christ.

**In what ways do you need to connect your words and actions together in a greater way to show Christ's rule in your life to point others to Christ?**

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"At his call the dead  
awaken, Rise to life  
from earth and sea;  
All the powers of  
nature shaken By His  
look, prepares to flee.  
Careless sinner, what  
will then become  
of thee?"<sup>2</sup>

—John Newton  
(1725–1807)

## **POINT 1: CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS RECOGNIZE THAT GOD'S KINGDOM IS HERE IN PART (LUKE 17:20-21).**

### **+ ILLUSTRATION**

In 2015, Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon invited the Irish pop band U2 to join him at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Subway Station in Manhattan to busk as passersby went to work. Bono, the band's front man, wore a wig, and the group sang "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." Some stopped and listened, while others did not recognize the singer. After some time, Fallon and the band took off their disguises, which drew a large crowd and resulted in an impromptu concert.<sup>3</sup>

If anyone thinks that they will respond to Christ at His second coming, be warned—they didn't recognize Him at His first coming. There will be no celebration for those who finally recognize Jesus at His second coming, when it is too late, but only sorrow for failing to find what they should have been looking for in the first place.

## **POINT 2: CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS ANTICIPATE THAT GOD'S KINGDOM IS COMING IN FULL (LUKE 17:22-35).**

### **+ COMMENTARY**

"Jesus' message is not meant for those disciples who think that they deserve a better fate than their neighbors, but for those who, in the midst of universal indifference and complacency, realize the desperateness of their situation, and ask, 'What must I do to be saved?'"<sup>4</sup>

#### **References**

1. Cyril of Alexandria, quoted in Luke, ed. Arthur A. Just Jr., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, vol. 3* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 271.
2. John Newton, "Day of Judgment, Day of Wonders," #663, *The Baptist Hymnal*, Public Domain.
3. Jimmy Fallon, *The Tonight Show*, episode #259, May 8, 2015, (New York: NBC) <http://www.youtube.com/fallontonight>.
4. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1168.