

## “Independence Day” Luke 17:20-37

**Context:** Luke recounts Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom’s in-breaking and Christ’s second coming in response to a Pharisee’s question. It is an account which will truly test believers’ faith in things unseen. It follows well into the fabric of faith and redemption taught in the previous parables, e.g. parables like the lost coin, the Prodigal Son, the unrighteous steward, the rich man, and mustard seed. By doing so, Luke fulfills the purpose of his Gospel: to steady the God-lover’s wobbly faith by revealing where the Kingdom of God is truly found and how it appears to the world.

**Life Principle:** Independence Day begins the day the heart is set free by Christ’s first appearance and is fully realized at His second.

### 1. Signs from within - Luke 17:20-21

The Pharisees expected the Kingdom to appear with signs of a dramatic, sudden appearance of the Messianic theocracy. Jesus skillfully reveals that the Kingdom of God has been ever-present and is now present as evinced by His works in their midst, but as only seen from the inside out, not vice versa.

### 2. Signs from without - Luke 17:22-25

God-lovers will ever long for Messiah’s return with sighs of groaning in what seems to be an eternity of waiting. As for signs, Jesus gives his disciples two: the first is the sign of the cross and the second is the unmistakable sudden cosmic revelation of His appearing. The first is shrouded in weakness and the second is displayed in omnipotence. The spectacular revelation of the latter should spare the disciple the delusion of false prophets declaring the knowledge of place, day, and hour.

### 3. Signs from days of yore - Luke 17:26-37

Christ’s sudden second coming is likened to the stories of Noah and Lot. The specific kind of verbal forms used contrast the people’s everyday habits of attachment to worldly life with the sudden destruction that befell them. Lot’s wife is then used as an example which shows that attachment to the earthly kingdom brings destruction. The key to the entire teaching of Christ’s return, kingdom attachment, and punishment or reward is found in verse 33. The teaching concludes with the disputed rapture passage. *I think it might* refer to the bodies of believers being left behind at translation as part of the great delusion of the anti-Christ (cp. 2 Thessalonians 2:7ff).

### For Further Study:

- As a **Bible study method**, look up Dallas Willard’s description of the Kingdom of God found on our website under Bible Study Resources, <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/Kingdom%20of%20God%20-%20Willard.pdf>. When did the Kingdom of God begin (cf. Psalm 145:13; Daniel 7:14)? How does that influence your interpretation of Jesus’ answer to the question in verse 20? What did the Pharisees expect to see when the Messiah brings the Kingdom? How does the Kingdom of God work itself out in the work you do, the social gatherings you attend, the movies you watch, the friends you choose, the money you spend, and the people you judge (cf. Colossians 3:17)?
- Luke 17:26-32 uses the story of Noah and Lot to highlight man’s lack of awareness of God’s impending judgment and Christ’s sudden return. Using your concordance, look up references to Noah and Lot to find out the reasons for judgment (cf. Genesis 6:13; 19:13). Why were Lot and Noah spared punishment (2 Peter 2:4-15a)? Upon what grounds will you be spared or punished (cf. Romans 1:16-18)?
- The crucial verse in this section is Luke 17:33. GracePoint’s doctrinal statement describes eternal preservation versus punishment in the doctrine of “imminent return” (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Last Things’** under **what we believe**, footnote 9 at <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf>). For what kingdom did the people strive during the “days of the Son of Man” (cp. Luke 17:26-28)? What Kingdom did Lot’s wife turn to when destruction came (cp. Luke 17:32; Genesis 19:17, 26; Hebrews 10:38; 2 Peter 2:28)? Where do you return in order to attach your stories of hope when destruction comes?

### Transformation exercise:

Memorize Luke 17:33. Consider your habits of attachment through that which you value. Each morning, pray that the Spirit would reveal to what kingdom your activities of life are attached.