Friend who got golf clubs for Christmas – felt the package – his name was on it – pretended – didn’t come true until Christmas

Christmas is like that – we possess the baby at First Coming of Christ but the full reality won’t come true until Second Coming – today – we will see the future realities of Christmas in anticipating the Second Coming of Christ


I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR

Jesus did not merely come to be a baby – He came to announce the coming of His kingdom – His rule and authority – that would permeate all people and all time – Mark 1:14-15 – “Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” – beginning of Jesus’ ministry – the “gospel of God” announces God’s ultimate control over the whole process of salvation – that process was “at hand” – Luke 17:20-21 – “…The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” NASB – the kingdom of God is not earthly – Jesus isn’t elected by Democrats or Republicans – the Kingdom is resident in the hearts of Jesus’ followers now – He will bring in earthly, physical kingdom during the millenium

Christmas announces the down payment of the Kingdom – Jesus’ coming into the world announced the presence of the One who would ultimately bring in the physical Kingdom on this earth – until then we simply stay attached to the King of the Kingdom

The joy of seeing Jesus and finding the Kingdom is unparalleled anywhere – Luke 2

- Shepherds are first to receive the news from an angel of the Lord – Luke 2:9 – “And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.” NASB – angels and blinding light tend to frighten people – Luke 2:10 “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people...’” NASB – lit. “I bring you the gospel which is for everyone!” – this brings “great joy” – Luke 2:11 “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” NASB – Jesus didn’t come as a politician or a military leader or an educator or a Poet Laureate to inspire – He came as a “Savior” because the greatest need of man is not education or money or military dominance – the greatest need of man is someone to take his sin!

- Angels appeared next – they filled the sky with their presence and made a heavenly proclamation – Luke 2:14 – “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace...” NASB

- Finally, the wise men showed up – Matthew 2:1, 2 – “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’” NASB – Herod freaked out – he had fought a battle with the Parthians several years before this – he knew these men were the ones who selected the kings for their country – they chose the wisest, most advanced man and gave him the mantle of king – Herod was afraid they were there to name someone King over Israel – his job was threatened – the wise men were Gentiles – but they looked for the Jewish King as one who would bring salvation
We live in the same kind of struggle – most have heard about Jesus but He threatens their world – don’t want Him as king because we want to be king – began with Jesus being tempted in the wilderness before He began his earthly ministry – Matthew 4:8-9 – “...the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.’” NASB – Luke 4:17 – “From that time Jesus began to preach and say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” NASB

That’s still the message – “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” through Jesus – but let’s be clear – Jesus is not like Santa Claus – He is not at the mall – no matter how many presents you buy – He’s not at the office party – no matter how much you celebrate – He’s not around your Christmas tree no matter how many stockings you fill – Jesus cannot be bought – He is not inherited – He is not a spiritual influence – He is not the personal property of any religion

Jesus offers His kingdom on His terms – not “be a good person” – “try as hard as you can” – “go to church” – “love everyone” – here’s the problem – Matthew 5:20 – “unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” – Jesus summed it up in Matthew 5:48 – “Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” NASB – but how can we be perfect?

Here’s the good news – we can never be perfect – but Jesus has offered that we don’t have to be perfect – Hebrews 10:10-14 – “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

It rained Friday night – we lit a fire, turned on Christmas tree lights, had some hot chocolate and enjoyed a good movie – Jesus is near to those who seek Him – why stay outside?

II. HE IS THE RULER OF LIFE

Luke 21:32-33 – “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” NASB – makes three promises:

A. The fulfillment of “all things”

“This generation” is the future generation living during the time of the tribulation – “all things” refers to the things that will happen at the end of the tribulation – Matthew 24:21 speaks of that time as “...a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.” NASB – during that time world leader known as Antichrist will break the treaty he has made with Israel in a horrible way – called “the abomination of desolation” – false prophets will rise (Matthew 24:23-26) – catastrophic signs in the heavens (Matthew 24:27–29) – and Christ will return (Matthew 24:30) – have these taken place yet? – no – so “this generation” must be future

God is so perfectly in control of the future that He wrote all of these events down in advance – same with our lives – Is God in control of all things? – of Sandy Hook?

- Natural grief – excruciating
- Responses are misplaced – gun control laws won’t do anything to prevent this – like trying to prevent rain – strikes me as curious that people advocating this are “pro-abortion” – false sense of morality that is hypocritical – they would outlaw guns to save life of a six year old, but put a scalpel in the hand of a surgeon to carve up a baby in the womb

God was perfectly in charge in Sandy Hook – same as when:

- Pharaoh ordered every baby killed – God preserved Moses – grew up to deliver two million people from slavery
- Herod killed every baby boy under two – yet Jesus survived
None of us will get out of this life alive – we may not know what He is doing – but God is in control
Life – like walking down a hallway – with lights out

B. Heaven and earth will pass away

Astounding – He was either a crack-pot “doomsday” prophet who should be disregarded – or He is telling the truth – which is it?

- Bible is clear that “heaven and earth will pass away.”
  Revelation 20:11 – “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.” NASB – “fled” pictures the sudden and violent termination of the universe – “no place was found for them” – i.e. “the earth and sky” – displaced, then vanish from existence
  2 Peter 3:7, 10-12 – “But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire...” “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar...” (roidzedon – “loud hissing, roaring speed” - like a crackling fire – sound of imploding atoms – onomatopoeia – WHOOOSHSH!!) “…and the elements will be destroyed...” (luo = “to loose” – pictures the molecular disintegration of matter – atomic implosion) “…with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.” – 2 Peter 3:12 – we are to be “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!” NASB

Everything you get for Christmas will be destroyed – reality check! – 680 to Marina Vista Road to the dump – it all ends up there – why would we give our lives to tomorrow’s trash?

C. My words will not pass away

Luke 21:33 – “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.” NASB – 1 Peter 1:24-25 – “...All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord endures forever. 'And this is the word which was preached to you.” – everything that man does will eventually fail – every invention, building, accomplishment, everything – including man himself – it will all die and pass from the scene like a wilted flower in the hot sun

From the very beginning people have scoffed at God’s words when they were not immediately fulfilled
- Genesis 2:17 – God told Adam he would die if he ate of the fruit – anyone seen Adam lately?
- Genesis 9 – God told Noah there was going to be a flood – people scoffed – flood came and covered the earth
- God told Israel to cease from idolatry and following other gods that practiced male and female prostitution, offered babies to idols or they would be taken into captivity – they were!
- But God also promised a coming Messiah – He came – Luke 2:14 – a multitude of heavenly angels pronounced – “'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'” NASB
- Skeptics question this – “Where is the peace promised by the angels?” – Does God keep His word?

The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies regarding first Advent:
- 2 Samuel 7 – Messiah would come from David’s line
- Micah 5:2 – he would be born in Bethlehem
- Isaiah 7:14 – born of a virgin and His name would be called “Immanuel” – these are the exact words used by Gabriel to convince Joseph that it was okay to take Mary as his wife in Matthew 1:23 – “’Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, 'God with us.'”

But there were other prophecies given regarding the Messiah that were not fulfilled in the first Advent:
Eternal Davidic Kingdom – 2 Samuel 7:12-13 – “...I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” NASB

World government – Isaiah 9:6 – “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” NASB

Death eliminated – Isaiah 25:8 – “He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth...” NASB

Revelation 21 promises additional fulfillment:
- New heaven and new earth – Revelation 21:1
- New Jerusalem – capital of heaven – Revelation 21:2-22
- New relationships – God with us – Revelation 21:3
- New life – no death, no sin, no suffering – Revelation 21:4

The best Christmas ever – God fulfills His word – John 6:37 – “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” – I asked Anne what she wants for Christmas – “All I want is you!” — “Yea, but what else?” – went to the mall yesterday searching for the one perfect gift – God doesn’t have to search for perfect gift for you – it’s Him

III. BE ON GUARD

A. Don’t waste your time

Luke 21:34 – “Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life...” – NASB

- “Be on guard” – impv. – “to have toward” – “to pay attention” – “to hold a ship in a direction, to sail towards” – this pictures someone who has something, but is diligent not to lose it
- The “heart” – kardia – lit. the pith of wood or the seed of a plant – it pictures the center of life – the seat of emotions and source of spiritual life
- “weighted down” – refers to “bodily weight” – denotes two characteristics of existence – oppressive suffering and significant power.
- “dissipation” – lit. “a headache, a hangover, a shooting pain or a confusion in the head arising from intemperance in wine or strong liquors.” – refers to the sense of disgust and loathing from an overindulgence in wine and carousing.
- “drunkenness” – always used in negative light – no such thing as a “good drunk” – unaware, incoherent, angry – same spiritually – he is not aware of nor alert to the things that would weigh him down and distract him from godly living in the light of the return of Christ
- the “worries of life” – “to be anxious, worried, or fearful of something in the future” -

Very descriptive passage – anything that distracts us from living for Jesus is like being drunk, complete with the hangover! – think, December 26 – house is a mess – you’re in debt – kids wanted more – you have to return everything or put it away!

B. Don’t be surprised

Luke 21:34 concludes with “…and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap…” NASB – if you are on guard – if you’re not wasting your life like a drunk – then you won’t be surprised

The implication – if you are not on guard, then the coming of the Lord will be “like a trap” – some Christians would be completely surprised if Jesus showed up today – right now – it would be inconvenient, embarrassing – many would leave this earth for heaven like Lot’s wife left Sodom – breaking our necks looking back! – 1 John 2:28 – “Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.” NASB – how do you build confidence?

- Don’t be ashamed of His words – Luke 9:26 – “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”
- Love His appearing – 2 Timothy 4:8 – “in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” NASB
- Know about His Coming – 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.” NASB – how can someone not be concerned about the coming of Christ? – why would someone not have a desire to know about prophecy?

C. Pray for strength

Luke 21:36 – “But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” NASB – Jesus is talking to the believers who will be alive during the Tribulation – they will have to face horrible persecution – they were to pray that they would stay strong during persecution with the knowledge that they would soon “stand before the Son of Man.”

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What does Christmas mean to most people?
2. In what sense has the kingdom of God “come near” us in Jesus?
3. How does the birth of Jesus relate to the kingdom of God?
4. What did Jesus mean by “My words will not pass away” in Luke 21:33?
5. What are we to be “on guard” against in Luke 21:34-36?
6. What does Christmas mean to you?