

Luke 34 – The Final Offer

In 1940, on the brink of the Second World War, British diplomat James Lonsdale-Bryans was sent to Italy to meet with German counterparts in order to try to avoid the conflict everyone knew was soon coming. He met with German diplomat Ulrich von Hassell and made one final offer to the Germans in hopes that they would accept their gains in Poland and Czechoslovakia and refrain from going farther into Europe. This offer was rejected and Germany continued to invade other European nations. Diplomacy then, as now, has always been the first means of reconciliation and compromise before military action is to be taken. No good nation wants war, and if negotiations can be reached, that is always preferable. However, as in the case of Germany in World War Two or the Taliban today, those conditions of peace are not always accepted.

The Bible describes another kind of conflict in another kind of kingdom. The biblical narrative is that God, when He created humankind, put him in charge of the earth. He said in Genesis 1:26: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” It says just two verses later: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Notice that one of the purposes that God had for His creation of man is that they would have dominion over the earth. Mankind is to rule over all the earth, including the animals. While I believe that mankind should show benevolence and economy in its dominance over the earth's resources, the Bible is also clear that we were put in charge.

However, this dominion was in part lost on the part of mankind. While Adam and Eve were in the garden, they enjoyed fellowship with God. He warned them and told them that if they broke His laws, they would be separated from Him and suffer the consequences. They did break God's one rule and in that moment lost their fellowship with God. It seems, however, that they also lost their rulership over God's dominion as well. It appears that when Adam listened to and obeyed the voice of the serpent, who was Satan, they gave the dominion of the earth to him. I say this because the Bible speaks of Satan in terms that indicate that he is the ruler of the world. Let me provide a few verses that speak to this.

The first is Ephesians 2:2, which says “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Notice that this verse says some important things. First, it mentions the “prince of the power of the air.” The word “prince” is one used for those in authority. Other places in the New Testament this word is translated “ruler” or “chief.” Jesus uses this word in a few places in the Bible. He says in John 12:31: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” In John 14:30, Jesus says: “Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” He says in John 16:11 “Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” Of whom is this speaking? Ephesians 2:2 also says that whoever this prince is, he is a “spirit,” and one that works in “the children of disobedience,” which denotes his wickedness. This evil spirit is none other than the one in the garden, Satan. Satan is referred to as the “prince of this world.”

There are other verses that indicate that Satan and his demons are rulers in this world. Ephesians 6:12 says “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” This verse says that our fight is not against physical powers, but spiritual ones. Our conflict is against those spirits who are ruling in this world. The book of Daniel elaborates on this theme further. In Daniel 10, Daniel is praying to God and is answered by an angel three weeks later. The angel explains that he was not able to come sooner because he was fighting with a wicked spirit. He refers to him as “the prince of the kingdom of Persia.” While Persia was a physical place, this angel indicates that he was fighting a spiritual battle. I do not pretend to know everything about the spiritual realm or angels, but the little we do know indicates that Satan and his demons have a kingdom on this earth.

One final proof I will offer is in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 14, the prophet describes Satan's fall from an angel in heaven to God's enemy on the earth. He says in Isaiah 14:16 what will happen to Satan at the end of times: "They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms." This verse acknowledges that Satan is responsible for what goes on behind the scenes of world politics. This theme is continued in Revelation, where it talks about Satan's influence over the world. Revelation 12:9 says "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

Revelation 20 says "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season...and when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." Satan not only is ruler of this world, but will at the very end of time stage one final rebellion against God, at which time he will finally be put down and cast into the Lake of Fire. The Bible is clear that this world is under the control of Satan.

As dismal as this sounds, God has throughout the Bible offered hope. It was God's Plan from the beginning to take back what was His in the kingdom of this world. One day, the Bible says, Jesus Christ will be ruler of the entire world. This is clear at the end of Revelation, where it says: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Psalm 45:6 says "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." That this throne is meant for Jesus is clearly seen in Psalms 110:1-2 "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." Jesus applied this verse to Himself during His life.

While I do not have time to speak of every reference of Jesus ruling over the earth, I will say that it is clear that this was what God intended. It was prophesied in Genesis 49:10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." This is referring to Jesus, who was from the tribe of Judah. God promised to King David in 2 Samuel 7:16: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." This is reiterated in Psalm 89 and Isaiah 9:6-7, where it says "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Thus, when Jesus arrived on the scene in New Testament times, there was an expectation there that He would be the king over Israel. At this time, Israel was ruled by two different and contemporary rulers. The first was King Herod and his sons, who exercised extreme brutality in their reign, and who were not Jewish by birth. The second was the Roman empire, which was also brutal, but were restrictive as well. While they allowed things like the sacrifices to occur, they controlled them. The garments of the high priest were kept in the Roman fort overlooking the Temple grounds, and on Yom Kippur the high priest was forced to go and ask them for it to carry out his duties. They also restricted the carrying out of punishment, as is evident in John 18:31. Roman soldiers were a constant presence and a constant menace, and it was the hope of every Jew that someday soon their ruled would end.

For these and many other reasons the Jews hoped that the Deliverer promised by God would come during their lifetime to help them be rid of their foreign overlords. This is why when Jesus came, He was initially received

so well. They reasoned that a man who could multiply food could provide enough sustenance for an army. A man who could heal diseases or raise the dead could help them win a battle and provide an invincible army. John 6 even tells us that they wanted to take Jesus and make Him king by force, but He would not allow them to do it. Why is this? If Jesus was the One that God had promised, why would He not accept their offer for the kingdom? The reason is that Jesus was not offering simply a physical kingdom, but a spiritual one as well. At the end of time when Jesus sits on His throne, it will be in a kingdom of those who have sworn their allegiance to Him by placing their faith in Him. This is what is needed before the offer of the kingdom is accepted.

This was the message of both Jesus and John the Baptist. John had said “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” in Matthew 3:2. He had said in Mark 1:15 “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” The conditions for receiving the coming kingdom were that they needed to both repent and believe the Gospel. Jesus gave many parables about the kingdom of heaven, several of them talking about giving up all one had for it. We have covered these in our study through Luke and will continue this theme, but the idea is that the offer of the kingdom had spiritual requirements.

However, the people, especially the Jewish rulers, were not willing to make these concessions to have a Deliverer. The Jewish authorities in John 9 made it clear that they did not believe that Jesus was the One that God had promised, despite His miracles to authenticate His message. They had made a decree in John 9:22 “that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.” The Bible says in Matthew 14:5; Mark 14:1; John 11:53, and John 12:10 that the rulers of the Jews sought to put Jesus to death. Not only them, but the people themselves rejected Jesus as Ruler. John 6:66 says “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” The final culmination eventually happened during the trial and crucifixion, when the Jews said “We have no king but Caesar” in John 19:15.

But before that happened, Jesus issued one final offer of the kingdom to the people of Israel, and we find that offer in Luke 10, which is our text this morning. It is fruitless to conjecture what would have happened if they would have accepted Jesus’ offer since they did not. It was clear that God knew that they would not accept and planned for Jesus to come to earth to die on the cross. Jesus’ death and resurrection provided freedom not from Rome but from sin and the condemnation to Hell. It is by the means of the death of Christ that we can be saved, and this was the Plan of God from the beginning, as evidenced by Acts 2:23. But Jesus, in His mercy and love, still offers, knowing they will reject Him. Here is what the Bible says:

“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house.

And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”

We talked about the kind of disciple Jesus was looking for in last week’s study. He called His twelve, but now He calls an additional seventy. Newer Bible versions say “seventy-two,” but the best manuscripts and many early church fathers read simply seventy. Jesus takes these seventy and sends them out two by two. This is for companionship, for sure, and encouragement, but also for accountability. Jesus was about to go throughout the nation and even the surrounding areas, and wanted the people there to be able to hear and contemplate His

message before He came to give it in full. Therefore, he sends out thirty-five groups of men before him to preach His message. The need for this message is great, as is evidenced by what Jesus says in verse 2: “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”

Jesus compares those who are going to hear His message to a field of wheat that is ready to be harvested. He says first that the harvest is great. There is no way to tell how many people were alive or even in the area of Jesus’ day. Some scholars estimate that the world population was between 200 and 300 million people, with 45 million in the Roman Empire and with no more than a million in Palestine. Today, by contrast, yields a world population that just crossed seven billion people. This means that if their harvest was great, how much greater is ours? He says second that although there is a great harvest, the labourers are few. There are not enough Christians for everyone to have a close acquaintance who knows the Gospel. It is for this reason that many Christian churches, such as ours, believe in worldwide missions. We believe it is the duty of every Christian to give the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone, but some people God has called to go into foreign countries to preach the Gospel. He says third that we should pray that God would send more laborers into this field.

Jesus then gives instructions to his seventy disciples. He first warns them that the task into which He is sending them is dangerous, and that they wouldn’t be always welcomed. He compares them to lambs who are being sent into a pack of wolves. Sheep have no natural defense and need to rely on human shepherds to protect them. The same is true for Jesus’ disciples: they will have to rely on Him for all of their needs while they are out among those who are hostile to their message. This is what He says next. He tells them not to take any provisions for themselves, but to trust Him for everything that they have. He tells them in verse four not to take purse, nor scrip, nor shoes. The purse was a bag for money, which means they should have no trust in their purchasing power. The scrip was a bag for food and provisions, which means they should have no trust in their ability to feed themselves. He also says to not take shoes. This could mean that He didn’t want them taking any sandals with them, but probably it means that He didn’t want them making any extra provision for the trip. When we go camping or on a long trip, it takes much time to prepare. Jesus wanted them to go, trusting Him.

He tells them not to salute anyone as they went, which indicates the urgency of the trip. They were not to spend any time greeting others as they went: there was little time for that. He also tells them to be satisfied with the arrangements they are given. If someone accepts them into their house, the disciples are to bless it and stay there, not going from house to house looking for better arrangements. In the culture of the Middle East, hospitality is one of the highest virtues. If someone came to your door looking for a meal or a place to stay, you were culturally obligated to give them what they wanted. If when you bless the house you find the people inside unwelcome, Jesus said that the blessing would return to the disciple with no effect of that blessing on the family.

But far from simply getting a free meal and lodging from people, Jesus wants His disciples to preach a message. This message is found in verse 9: “The kingdom of God is come nigh to you.” This is this final offer to the people of Israel. Notice that it was supposed to be authenticated by miracles of healing. Anyone can come into a town and claim to be speaking for God, but doing a miracle will help convince people of their genuineness. The working of miracles is to confirm the message of the coming kingdom.

It is the offer of a physical kingdom on the earth, but again with spiritual requirements. In a way it is a spiritual kingdom as much as it is a physical kingdom. This kingdom is what the earth should have been, had Adam obeyed God and kept the dominion God had given him. This is the way in which Christ will eventually rule the world: in righteousness. The nation of Israel was originally set up to be a nation ruled by God. They were to be the great example of a nation ruled by God’s moral laws. However, not only did Israel fail to keep God’s laws, but they eventually demanded a king. The first king of Israel was a disobedient man, the second was an adulterer, and the third was an idolater. The kingdom then split, thus beginning a long line of bad rulers, eventually resulting in the dissolving of the nation of Israel in captivity. But here Jesus offers a better kingdom.

In a way, it is a spiritual kingdom, one that will not be physical until Jesus Himself comes to reign. He describes what the people of this kingdom will look like in His famous “Sermon on the Mount,” which says in part: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” This is what the citizens of His kingdom look like, though we may not see His kingdom in this lifetime.

However, not everyone, as we know, accepts this offer of the kingdom. Jesus even warns of this in the next few verses: “But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, ‘Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’ But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.”

There would be some cities which, when the disciples came, would reject them. They would not want to hear the message of the kingdom or even hear what the disciples have to say. If and when this happened, said Jesus, the disciples were to wipe off the dust from themselves. What does this mean? This was a way of separating themselves from the city. The refusal to carry even the dust from the city meant that the disciples, and by proxy God, was done with them and that the offer had been retracted because of the rejection. It was a visual way of saying that there was no longer any association between the disciples and that city. However, notice that with this refusal of the kingdom was a proclamation that it was still coming. Jesus still wanted people to know about the kingdom, even people who didn’t want to know. This is the love, patience, and mercy of Jesus shown.

This does not mean that Jesus will always show mercy. The Bible says that God is “longsuffering, not willing that any should perish.” It says that God is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” However, God is also a God of holiness and justice, and One that will mete out punishment justly deserved and consistently rejected. Such was the case of Israel in the Old Testament. He says in Numbers 14:22-23 “Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it.” God is longsuffering, but eventually will bring the promised judgment.

Jesus gives a two lists of cities that will or have received His offer and compares them in verses 12-15. The cities who have already received the judgment and punishment of God are the cities of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon. The cities who have not yet received His punishment are the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Let me talk about these cities briefly. The city of Sodom was a city whose destruction is found in Genesis 19. God said in Genesis 18:20-21: “Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.” The Bible says that two angels go into Sodom and sister city Gomorrah to see the wickedness firsthand. Not only are the people of Sodom inhospitable, but they are unrestrained in their appetite for fornication. The city is full of homosexuals and people of violence, and God is forced to destroy the city with fire and brimstone, sparing only one man and his two daughters.

The cities of Tyre and Sidon were cities of the Phoenicians, located on the Mediterranean Sea. They were thoroughly pagan and devoid of God, and were thus condemned by God in the Old Testament. Prophecies against them are found in Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26-28. Ezekiel 28:6-7 says: “Therefore thus saith the Lord

GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.” He says in Ezekiel 28:22-23: “Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD.” He says in Amos 1:9-10: “For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.”

God did finally utterly destroy the cities of Tyre and Sidon, to the point where they were uninhabited for many centuries. The Bible says that the king of Tyre during David’s time was friendly toward Israel, and so had knowledge of the light that was in God’s law. Sidon, a sister city and region, had the same light, but the Bible says in 1 Kings 17 that God sent Elijah there personally, which means that they also had light of the knowledge of God. Unfortunately, they did not act on this light and were doomed to destruction, which God eventually brought. Jesus contrasts these three cities with three of His contemporary cities: Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Let me look at these three cities briefly as we close.

We do not know very much about Chorazin, as it is only mentioned in passages where Jesus condemns it. Archaeologists say that it is probably on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum. John 1:44 says that Peter, Andrew, and Philip were from the city of Bethsaida, so it was presumably a fishing town, also on the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was a city that Jesus frequented and even made hub of His activities in the region. Mark 1:21 says that Jesus went into Capernaum’s synagogue to teach them. Apparently all of these cities rejected Jesus’ teaching in some measure, and Jesus curses them by saying “Woe!” The reason that Jesus pronounces a curse on these cities is that not only have they rejected light, but they have rejected a greater light than the other cities had available to them. Jesus even goes far enough to say that if the people of those Old Testament cities had seen all the miracles that Jesus had done in them, they would have repented. They would have been spared destruction as Nineveh did when it repented. They were not offered that light, but Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin had, and had not responded.

What about you this morning? Perhaps you have not been to church very much to hear the message of the Gospel. I think it is immensely important to be a part of a Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church, so that you can exercise your spiritual gifts and learn more about Jesus and what the Bible says. But if you have not been to church very much, there is a chance you have never heard the simple plan of salvation. Perhaps, sadly, you do go to church and still have never heard the simple plan of salvation. You have been given a little light, but have not acted upon it. Friend, let this be your light this morning. Though you have broken God’s laws and made yourself a rebel against heaven, God loved you enough to send Jesus Christ to die on the cross for your sins. Jesus, being perfect, took your sins upon Himself, so that you could have His perfection and He could take your punishment. If you will in faith believe that Jesus died for you and accept His free gift of salvation, you can be saved, even this morning where you sit in your own home or car.

Friend, don’t reject this offer of salvation. Like the offer of Jesus’ kingdom heard about this morning, this may be your last chance to receive it. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says: “now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. You can do so in the following ways:

You can stop by our church building, which is located at 909 W. 8th St., by the softball diamonds. You can call us at 732-3321. You can E-mail us at church@fbcpr.org. That’s CHURCH at F B C P R dot O R G. Or you can log on to our website, which is www.fbcpr.org. If you would like to have a copy of this broadcast, either in audio or transcript form, you can find it on our website tomorrow. If you enjoy this program, let us know by contacting our church. Please join us this morning at 10:30 for our worship service. Please join us again next week for the Way of Truth Radio Broadcast, brought to you by the First Baptist Church of Park Rapids, MN.