

The title of this morning's sermon is, "The Second Coming of Christ Will Be..."

On Sunday mornings we are working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse and we find ourselves at Luke 17:22.ⁱ

Contrast allows things to stand out. For example, when the moon is out during the day, we can't see it very well, because it is close to the color of the sky. But we can see the moon very well at night, because its white and gray color stands out so sharply against the black night sky.

Similarly, lightning stands out incredibly well against the night sky, because of its bright white color against the black background.

This morning we will see why Jesus chose lightning as a metaphor for His Second Coming.

Look with me at **verse 22...**

Luke 17:22 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."

Jesus was going to be gone from the disciples and they were going to long to see Him, but he said they would not be able to, because they would not be alive when He returned.

The desire the disciples would have to see Christ is the same desire we should have. Many New Testament verses encourage us as believers to have this desire. Here are just a few of them:

- **1 Corinthians 1:7 As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,**
- **1 Thessalonians 1:10 Wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead.**
- **Titus 2:13 Waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**
- **Jude 20 Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.**

Maranatha was the common greeting among Christians in the early church. It is an Aramaic word that means "the Lord is coming" or "come, O Lord."

In the following verses Jesus helps His disciples, both in His day and our day, recognize His Second Coming.

Look with me at **verse 23...**

Luke 17:23 And they will say to you, 'Look, there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them.

There were going to be people claiming that Jesus had returned, and he did not want His disciples misled into thinking that He had returned in some secret or mysterious way that was concealed from the world.ⁱⁱ

Because, the truth is, there will be no mistaking when Jesus has returned, as he explains in the following verse...

Luke 17:24 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.

There are three reasons it is very fitting to compare Jesus's Second Coming with **lightning** and this brings us to lesson one...

Lesson One: Like lightning, the Second Coming of Christ will be (Part One) visible.

The disciples would not need to believe people who said, “Look, there!” or “Look, here!” because the Second Coming will be as visible as lightning that lights up the whole sky.

Listen to the way the amplified words **verse 24**...

Luke 17:24 For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, gives light to the other part of the sky, so [visible] will the Son of Man be in His day.

There will be no mistaking when Jesus returns. It will be universally visible.

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Please mark your spot in Luke and turn to **Acts 1**. We will start at **verse 6** for context.

Acts 1:6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Despite everything Jesus had taught, there were two things the disciples did not understand that led to this question:

1. First, they didn’t understand that Jesus would leave them.
2. Second, in our last sermon, I told you Jesus spiritually established His Kingdom in His First Coming, and He was going to physically establish His kingdom at His Second Coming. But the disciples thought He was going to physically establish His kingdom now.

Look how Jesus responds...

Acts 1:7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

The disciples were confused about a few things, but one thing they were not confused about was that there would be a physical kingdom established on the earth. John MacArthur wrote, *“This mirrored what Christ taught and what the Old Testament predicted. Otherwise, [Jesus] would have corrected them about such a crucial aspect of His teaching.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

Jesus told them they didn’t need to worry about the time of His Second Coming. Instead, they needed to worry about remaining faithful until that time. Look at **verse 8**...

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The Holy Spirit would come upon them and empower them to be His witnesses throughout Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth.

This is still the mission today as we preach the gospel and send missionaries all over the globe.

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Now watch what happens...

Acts 1:9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

The cloud that received Jesus is the glory cloud, or Shekinah, that represented God’s presence. This is the cloud that went with the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus 13:20–22). This is the same cloud God spoke to Moses from (Exodus 33).

To make it simple, the words **a cloud took [Jesus] out of their sight** means God the Father received His Son into heaven.

Now look what happened...

Acts 1:10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes,

More than likely, these are angels. It seems like they had to show up, because the disciples would have stood here staring into heaven until Jesus returned.

Acts 1:11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Notice the angels clearly said Jesus would return from heaven the same way that He went to heaven. He ascended to heaven bodily and physically, so He is going to return from heaven bodily and physically for all to see.

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Now let me pause and explain something...and this brings us to lesson two...we will return to lesson one...

Lesson Two: Preterists believe the future is in the past.

Preterism is based on the Latin *preter*, which means “past” It is the eschatological or prophetic view that the end times were fulfilled in 70 A.D. when Rome attacked Jerusalem.

One important distinction with preterism is there are two groups...

Partial preterists believe that most of the book of Revelation and the Olivet Discourse, such as the Rapture, Tribulation, Antichrist, and mark of the beast, were already fulfilled. But they still look forward to the Second Coming of Christ to physically establish His kingdom on the earth.

Well-known partial preterists would be R. C. Sproul, Kenneth L. Gentry, Gary DeMar, and Hank Hanegraaff (the Bible Answer Man).

In terms of denominations, the Orthodox Presbyterians (OPC) and the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) are partial preterists.

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Full preterism teaches that ALL future events, such as Jesus’s Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment, are in the past. In the case of the final judgment, they believe it is still in the process of being fulfilled.

Many full preterists believe that we are living in a form of the new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21 and 22.

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Even though partial preterists and full preterists would seem to be close together, because they are both preterists, there is actually a world of difference between the two. There is so much difference that partial preterists are within the realm of Orthodox Christianity, but because full preterists deny a future Second Coming of Christ and future resurrection of the dead, they are outside the realm of Orthodox Christianity. In other words, full preterists are heretics.

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As you might expect, I couldn’t find any recognizable, respected full preterists or full preterist denominations.

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Now turn to **Revelation 1**.

Look with me at **verse 1**...

Revelation 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John

The words **the things that must soon take place** refer to the events described in the following chapters. Preterists cling to these words and date the writing of the book of Revelation earlier than 70AD, so that they can say the events describe what occurred in 70 A.D.

It goes outside the scope of this sermon, but there is considerable evidence to support the book of Revelation being written in the last decade of the first century around 95 AD, near the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (81-96), and well after Rome attacked Jerusalem. In other words, Revelation couldn't be describing events in 70AD.

So how do we explain this verse saying that the events in the book **must soon take place**?

The word for **soon** is *tachos* (pronounced tah-hoss), and it means, "quickness, speed." It is related to our word tachometer.

Let me tell you two other places *tachos* is used...

- **Acts 12:7** An angel...struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly (*tachos*)." And the chains fell off his hands.
- **Acts 22:18** "Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly (*tachos*)."

There is another Greek word used to refer to something happening in the near future. Look at **verse 3**...

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for **THE TIME IS NEAR**.

The Greek word used here for **near** is *engys* (pronounced en-goose). This isn't the word in **verse 1**.

So, to be clear, **Revelation 1:1**:

- Is not referring to **WHEN** Jesus will return...soon after John wrote this.
- It is referring to **HOW** Jesus will return: quickly or swiftly.
- The NKJV has an asterisk that says **soon** can also be translated as "quickly" or "swiftly."
- The HCSB says **what must QUICKLY take place**.

And this brings us to the second reason it is fitting that Jesus compared His Second Coming with lightning...

Lesson One: Like lightning, the Second Coming of Christ will be (Part Two) quick.

Turn a few chapters to the right to **Revelation 3:11**...

Revelation 3:11 I am coming soon (*tachos*). Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

Again, Jesus says he's returning quickly.

Finally, turn to **Revelation 22:6**...

Revelation 22:6 And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon (*tachos*) take place."

The angel told John that the events in Revelation would quickly take place. This is largely referring to the judgments in Revelation 6-19 that are quickly unleashed. People don't have time to prepare.

Similarly, when Jesus returns, He returns quickly like lightning striking. People don't have time to prepare.

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Now go ahead and turn back to **Luke 17:25**...

Luke 17:25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Every translation I could find says **must suffer** versus should suffer or will suffer.

Why is that?

Because it was God's sovereign plan so Jesus could redeem sinful man.

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Jesus was telling the disciples about the glory of His Second Coming, but He wanted them to get the order of events correct: it is suffering and then glory....

Luke 24:26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and [then] enter into his glory?"

There are at least three separate recorded instances in Luke's Gospel of Jesus telling the disciples that He would **suffer and be rejected**, but they never understood.

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Now after telling them about His suffering, Jesus moves back to talking about His Second Coming by using two of the most familiar accounts of judgment in all of Scripture to prepare people. Look with me at the first account in **verse 26**...

Luke 17:26 Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

Jesus says that when He returns it will be like the days of Noah.

Now, when I think about Noah's day, I pretty much think about one thing: wickedness. Here's the verse that comes to mind...

Genesis 6:5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

But interestingly, when Jesus discusses Noah's day, he doesn't mention wickedness. Look what He describes the people doing...

Luke 17:27 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.

That doesn't sound very wicked, does it?

These are some of the most basic and common behaviors:

- **Eating and drinking**, but it's not referring to drinking alcohol.
- **Marrying and being given in marriage**

It's almost like Jesus is trying not make the people sound bad.

Keep this in mind and look at Jesus's second illustration...

Luke 17:28 Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,

Now Jesus says when He returns it will be like **the days of Lot**.

I don't know if anything else in all of Scripture can make us think of wickedness as much as Sodom. Sodom has become a metaphor for wickedness. When we want to talk about wicked places, we say they are like Sodom.

But when Jesus mentions the activities the people in Sodom are engaging in, He doesn't mention anything wicked. Instead, again, He mentions very moral and reasonable activities:

- **Eating and drinking**
- **Buying and selling**
- **Planting and building**

There's no mention of marrying and being given in marriage because Sodom was known for its homosexuality and had no regard for marriage. But there's no mention of homosexuality or the activity that led to Sodom's destruction.

In fact, we wouldn't even know that Jesus was talking about a wicked place if not for the mention of Lot.

But sure enough He is, because look what happens...

Luke 17:29 but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—

The judgment came swiftly in Lot's day just like in Noah's day. People were in the middle of their everyday activities when the sulfur and fire came down from heaven.

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Now look at **verse 30**...

Luke 17:30 so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

Jesus makes it perfectly clear this is all about His Second Coming.

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So why did Jesus mention these two places, associate them with His Second Coming, but not mention their wickedness?

Because He is not emphasizing their wickedness. Instead, He is emphasizing how unexpectedly the judgment came...and this brings us to the last part of Lesson One...

Lesson One: Like lightning, the Second Coming of Christ will be (Part Three) unexpected.^{iv}

The people in Noah and Lot's day were completely unprepared when the judgment came. They were doing everything people would normally be doing:

- Eating and drinking
- Marrying and being given in marriage
- Buying and selling
- Planting and building

There is nothing inherently wrong with any of these things. The problem was the people were so absorbed in their everyday lives that they were completely unsuspecting when the judgment came:

- The problem wasn't the physical earthly things they were doing
- The problem was that they had no concern for anything spiritual or heavenly

Similarly, people will be completely preoccupied with their earthly affairs when Jesus returns.

This is why most of Jesus's parables about His Second Coming present Him returning unexpectedly and surprising people. Let me use just Matthew's gospel. Go ahead and turn to **Matthew 24**. We won't turn back to Luke.

Jesus told the parable about the thief who broke into the man's home unexpectedly...

Matthew 24:43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

He's coming unexpectedly. Don't let Him catch you unprepared.

Right after this, Jesus told the parable of a servant who didn't expect his master to return...

Matthew 24:50 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.

Pretty serious punishment for being surprised by his master. The point is, he wasn't a believer, because he gave no thought to his master's return.

Look in **Matthew 25**. Jesus told the parable of the ten virgins, but five were foolish and were not prepared when the bridegroom arrived...

Matthew 25:10 While [the foolish virgins] were going to buy [oil], the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. 11 Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.' 12 But he answered, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

All about Jesus coming unexpectedly, so we must be ready.

Outside of the Gospels, the rest of the New Testament also repeatedly tells us Jesus will return unexpectedly, by comparing His Second Coming with a thief:

- **1 Thessalonians 5:2 The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night...4 But you are not in darkness...for that day to surprise you like a thief.**
- **2 Peter 3:10 The day of the Lord will come like a thief.**
- **Revelation 3:3 I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.**
- **Revelation 16:15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!")**

Now you might be quick to say, "*Why of all things Jesus could compare himself with, does He choose a thief?*"

That's not really what's happening. He isn't comparing Himself with a thief. Instead, He compares the way He will return with the way a thief will rob you:

- A thief does not announce his arrival.
- He comes when it is unexpected.

The same is true with Jesus:

- The only way to be on guard against a thief is to live in constant readiness.
- And the only way to be prepared for Jesus's return is to live in constant readiness.

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And this brings us to lesson three...

Lesson Three: Jesus's first coming was for salvation and His Second Coming is for judgment.

When I ask you a question, I often tell you that it's not a trick question. But now I want to ask a question, and it is a trick question. Here we go...

Was the flood an account of salvation or judgment?

Yes!

Listen to this verse from this morning again...

Luke 17:27 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.

You can hear salvation and judgment in the verse:

- **Noah entered the ark.** It was salvation for eight souls: Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their three wives.^v
- **The flood came and destroyed them all.** It was judgment for the rest of the world.

It could have been salvation for even more: **2 Peter 2:5** says **Noah was a herald of righteousness**. Noah was preaching to the ancient world leading up to the flood, but they weren't listening. They were too busy with their earthly lives.^{vi}

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What about Sodom? Was it an account of salvation or judgment?

- It was salvation for Lot and his family...at least until his wife looked back as we will read about next week.
- It was judgment for the rest of the world.

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So often this is the case that salvation and judgment are mixed together...

When the Canaanites were judged, Rahab and the Gibeonites were saved.

When the Amalekites were judged, the Kenites were saved...

1 Samuel 15:6 Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

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People love to focus on salvation without the judgment...

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For GOD DID NOT SEND HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT IN ORDER THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE SAVED THROUGH HIM.

People quote this as though there is no judgment or condemnation...but this is only talking about Jesus's first coming.

Here's another verse making a similar point...

John 12:47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I DID NOT COME TO JUDGE THE WORLD BUT TO SAVE THE WORLD.

Again, this is only about Jesus's First Coming to save people from their sins. But in Jesus's Second Coming He comes into the world not as Savior, but as Judge.

There is an incredible duality to Christ, which is almost unfathomable, or almost difficult to harmonize:

- In the First Coming He is the Lamb, slain for the sins of the world providing salvation.
- In the Second Coming He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who devours His enemies providing judgment

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I was talking to my children about the idol we create when we think only about Christ as the Lamb, which is to say we think only about His love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

We must also think about Christ as the Lion, which is to say we must also think about His wrath, anger, and justice.^{vii}

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Let me conclude with this...

We don't want to be taken by surprise.

Even if Jesus isn't returning next week, next month, next year, or perhaps even in our lifetimes, let's live like he is because here's the thing...

Regardless of when he returns, we are going to meet him:

- It could be when he returns during our lifetimes
- Or it could be the day of our deaths

But we will meet him, and we want to be ready. And living like we can meet him any moment is the only way to be ready.

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If you have any questions, or I can pray for you in any way, I'll be up front after service, and I'd consider it a privilege to be able to speak with you.

Let's pray.

ⁱ Let's start at verse 20 for context...

Luke 17:20 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,

Jesus had been preaching the kingdom of God and He commissioned the twelve and the seventy to preach this kingdom. The kingdom was well-known.

The religious leaders did not ask this sincerely. They asked it mockingly because they couldn't see any supposed kingdom that Jesus established. Because they were spiritually blind, they could not see a spiritual kingdom.

But that's because brought the kingdom of God from heaven to earth in His first coming and it was a spiritual kingdom that could not be seen. Jesus would physically establish His kingdom at His Second Coming.

So, He told them that the kingdom could not be **observed** or seen physically.

Luke 17:21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

The people in Jesus’s day couldn’t say, “Look here is the kingdom,” or “Look there is the kingdom!” because it was a spiritual kingdom that couldn’t be seen.

But Jesus could say, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” for the same reason John earlier said **the kingdom of God was at hand** and Jesus said **the kingdom of God was near**: having Jesus in their midst meant having the kingdom in their midst.

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The Pharisees were not part of the kingdom, because they rejected Christ, the King of that kingdom. But the disciples were part of the Kingdom, so now that Jesus has answered the Pharisees, He turns His attention to the disciples and looks past the Kingdom to instruct them about His Second Coming.

ⁱⁱ Notice the similarity between **verses 20-21** and **verse 23**:

- **Luke 17:20 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.”**
- **Luke 17:23 And THEY WILL SAY TO YOU, ‘LOOK, THERE!’ OR ‘LOOK, HERE!’ Do not go out or follow them.**

Just like the disciples shouldn’t believe people who claimed to physically see the kingdom of God, they shouldn’t believe people who claimed Jesus had returned.

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, page 1432.

^{iv} Just follow me for a moment...

We might really appreciate the way a photo looks, but we tend to appreciate it even more if it is timed perfectly. I looked up some perfectly timed photos:

- One of them showed a father at a baseball game stretching out his hand to catch a bat that had been accidentally thrown right before it hit his son in the face. A photograph of a bat, a father, and a son, aren’t that big of a deal. The timing of the photo made it significant.
- Another photo showed numerous wind turbines in a row so that all their blades made a star. Again, wind turbines are no big deal, but the timing of the photo made it significant.
- Another photo showed a man walking across the street and there was a tree in the background and it looked like it was growing up out of the top of his head. Again, the timing made it entertaining.

When I was growing up one of my close friend’s father was a photographer. He showed me a photo he had taken, which had been selected for some award that I can’t remember, and it was a bolt of lightning striking the ground.

I suspect the photo won the award because we appreciate how perfectly timed it was capturing the lightning, because lightning strikes so unexpectedly. Similarly, Jesus’s Second Coming is unexpected like lightning.

^v Peter saw the flood as an illustration of the salvation found in Christ: **1 Peter 3:18-22**...

1 Peter 3:26 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.

The ark is a beautiful type of Christ:

- [The Ark—A Picture of Jesus | Answers in Genesis](#)
- [Six Ways in Which Noah’s Ark Is a Type of Christ – Biblical Spirituality Press](#)
- [Noah - a Type of Christ - My Windowsill](#)

^{vi} Similarly, prior to Jesus’s Second Coming there will be many warnings:

- The 144,000
- The three angels flying around the globe
- The two witnesses on the earth

But nobody will listen to them.

^{vii} We have been going through the book of Romans for months as a family and for the last few weeks we have been in Romans 9

Romans 9:21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use? 22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory.

These verses describe vessels of God’s mercy and vessels of His wrath. Another way to say it is these verses describe people who will know Christ as the Lamb and other people who will know Christ as the Lion.