

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

THE KINGDOM
OF GOD
AND
THE RAPTURE OF
THE OVERCOMERS

WITNESS LEE

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

THE KINGDOM
OF GOD
AND
THE RAPTURE OF
THE OVERCOMERS

WITNESS LEE

Living Stream Ministry
Anaheim, CA • www.lsm.org

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE RAPTURE OF THE OVERCOMERS

In [Luke 17:20](#) the Pharisees questioned the Lord Jesus as to when the kingdom of God comes. He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, Look, here! Or, There! For behold, the kingdom of God is among you” ([vv. 20-21](#)). The Lord’s answer indicates that the kingdom of God is not material but spiritual. It is the Savior in His first coming ([vv. 21-22](#)), in His second coming ([vv. 23-30](#)), in His overcoming believers’ rapture ([vv. 31-36](#)), and in His destroying of the Antichrist ([v. 37](#)) to recover the earth for His reign ([Rev. 11:15](#)).

[Luke 17:22-24](#) proves that the kingdom of God is the Savior Himself who was among the Pharisees when He was asked by them concerning the coming of the kingdom. Wherever the Savior is, there is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is with Him, and He brings it to His disciples. He is the seed of the kingdom of God

to be sown into God's chosen people to develop into God's ruling realm.

Since His resurrection, He is within His believers ([John 14:20](#); [Rom. 8:10](#)). Hence, the kingdom of God is within the church today ([Rom. 14:17](#)).

In [verse 21 of Luke 17](#) the Lord said to the Pharisees, "Behold, the kingdom of God is among you." The word "you" here refers to the questioning Pharisees ([v. 20](#)). The Savior as the kingdom of God was not within them; He was only among them.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE LORD IN HIS SECOND COMING

In [17:23-30](#) the Lord Jesus indicates that the kingdom of God is He Himself in His second coming. [Verse 24](#) says, "For just as the lightning flashes from one part of heaven and shines to the other part of heaven, so will the Son of Man be in His day." Concerning this verse we need to realize that the second coming of Christ has two aspects: one is the secret aspect toward His watchful believers; the other is the open aspect toward the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles. The "lightning" here signifies the open aspect of the

Lord's coming. Lightning is concealed in a cloud, waiting for an opportunity to flash forth. Christ will also be clothed with a cloud ([Rev. 10:1](#)) in the air for a time, and then He will suddenly appear like a flash to the earth.

EXECUTING JUDGMENT ON THE CORRUPTED WORLD

In [Luke 17:25](#) the Lord says, "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." Then in [verses 26 through 29](#) He goes on to describe this generation, saying that the days of the Son of Man will be as the days of Noah ([vv. 26-27](#)) and the days of Lot ([vv. 28-29](#)). In the days of Noah certain conditions existed. People were stupefied by eating, drinking, marrying, and being given in marriage. Furthermore, they did not know until the flood came and took them away. It will be the same in the days of the Son of Man. People will be stupefied by the necessities of this life, not knowing that God's judgment (signified by the flood) will come upon them by the Lord's coming. The believers, however, should be de-drugged and soberly know that the Lord is coming to execute God's judgment upon this corrupted world.

Eating, drinking, and marriage were originally

ordained by God for man's existence. But due to man's lust, Satan utilizes these necessities of human life to occupy man and keep him from God's interests. Toward the end of this age, this situation will be intensified and will reach its climax during the days of the Son of Man.

THE APPEARING OF THE MAN-SAVIOR

The conditions of evil living that stupefied the generation of Noah before the deluge and the generation of Lot before the destruction of Sodom portray the perilous condition of man's living before the Lord's *parousia* (presence, coming) and the great tribulation ([Matt. 24:3, 21](#)). If we would participate in the overcomers' rapture to enjoy the Lord's *parousia* and escape the great tribulation, we must overcome the stupefying effect of man's living today.

In [Luke 17:30](#) the Lord goes on to say, "It will be in the same way on the day in which the Son of Man is revealed." The Greek words translated "it will be in the same way" literally mean, "according to the same things it will be." As indicated by [verse 24](#), at the end of this generation the Man-Savior will be revealed as lightning flashing from one part of heaven and shining

to the other part. That flashing light will be the appearing of the kingdom. Actually, that lightning flash will be the appearing of the Man-Savior, the appearing of a Person; yet that appearing will also be the appearing of the kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE RAPTURE OF THE OVERCOMING BELIEVERS

In [17:31-36](#) the Lord indicates that the kingdom of God is related to Him and the rapture of His overcoming believers. This means that even the rapture of the believers is part of the kingdom of God. In fact, the rapture is also the Savior Himself. We can understand this if we realize that if we did not have Christ within us, we could never be raptured. The rapture in which we shall participate will be Christ Himself. When we have Christ in us to a sufficient degree, we shall be raptured.

THE WARNING CONCERNING LOT'S WIFE

The overcomers do not seek to preserve their soul life. In view of the warning concerning Lot's wife, they do not love or care for material things. [Verse 31](#) says, "In that day, he who shall be on

the housetop and his goods in the house, let him not come down to take them away; and he who is in the field, likewise, let him not turn back to the things behind.” This verse reveals that lingering in the earthly and material things will cause us to miss the overcomers’ rapture described in [verses 34 through 36](#).

In [verse 32](#) the Lord says, “Remember Lot’s wife.” Lot’s wife became a pillar of salt because she took a lingering, backward look at Sodom. That look indicated that she loved and treasured the evil world which God was about to judge and utterly destroy. She was rescued from Sodom, but she did not reach the safe place that Lot reached ([Gen. 19:15-30](#)). She did not perish; neither was she fully saved. Like the salt which becomes tasteless ([Luke 14:34-35](#)), she was left in a place of suffering shame. This is a solemn warning to world-loving believers.

NOT PRESERVING OUR SOUL LIFE

After reminding us of Lot’s wife, the Lord Jesus goes on to say, “Whoever seeks to preserve his soul life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose it, shall preserve it alive” ([Luke 17:33](#)). To preserve the soul life is to allow the soul to have its enjoyment and not to suffer. To lose the soul

life is to cause the soul to suffer the loss of its enjoyment. If the followers of the Man-Savior allow their soul to have its enjoyment in this age, they will cause their soul to suffer the loss of its enjoyment in the coming kingdom age. If they allow their soul to suffer the loss of its enjoyment in this age for the sake of the Man-Savior, they will cause their soul to have its enjoyment in the coming kingdom age, that is, to share the Lord's joy in ruling over the earth ([Matt. 25:21, 23](#)).

To preserve our soul is related to lingering in the earthly and material things mentioned in [Luke 17:31](#). We linger in the earthly things because we care for the enjoyment of our soul in this age. This will cause us to lose our soul; that is, our soul will suffer the loss of its enjoyment in the coming kingdom age.

THE RAPTURE IN RELATION TO OUR PRACTICAL LIVING

In [17:34 and 35](#) the Lord says, "I tell you, in that night there will be two on one couch; the one will be taken, and the other will be left. There will be two grinding at the same place; the one will be taken, but the other will be left." In these verses the rapture of the overcoming

believers is revealed. It will occur secretly and unexpectedly, at night to some believers who are sleeping and in the daytime to some sisters grinding at home and to some brothers working in the field. They are chosen because they have overcome the stupefying effect of this age.

In [Luke 14:25-35](#) the Savior charges us to pay the price insofar as we are able that we may follow Him. In [Luke 16:1-13](#) He charges us to overcome mammon so that we may serve Him prudently as a faithful steward. Here in [Luke 17:22-37](#) He charges us to overcome the stupefying effect of self-indulgent living in this age so that we may be raptured into the enjoyment of His *parousia* (presence, coming). These charges are all related to overcoming in the believers' practical living.

In both [17:34 and 35](#) the Lord says that “the one will be taken.” The Greek word for “taken” literally means “taken with.” This word denotes the rapture of the overcomers, who do not preserve their soul life by loving the worldly things of this age. Those who are taken in this way will be raptured before the great tribulation ([Matt. 24:21](#)), which will be a severe trial upon the whole inhabited earth ([Rev. 3:10](#)). To be thus raptured is to be kept out of the hour of trial

which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth ([Rev. 3:10](#)).

The words “grinding” in [Luke 17:35](#) and “in the field” in [Matthew 24:40](#) signify working for a living. Although the believers should not be stupefied by the necessities of this life, they need to work for a living. Any thought of giving up proper work for a living is another extreme of Satan’s tactics.

NOT ALL BELIEVERS RAPTURED AT ONCE

In [Luke 17:34-36](#) we see that some who are sleeping will be raptured in the night, and some sisters grinding and some brothers farming will be raptured in the day. Here we see that the rapture will involve saints who are in different places at different times. When the rapture takes place, some will be raptured in the night, and others will be raptured in the day, depending on where they live on earth.

In these verses we see that not all those who are sleeping, grinding, or farming will be raptured. This indicates that not all the believers will be raptured at once. The Lord says that two will be on one couch, and one will be taken

and the other will be left. The same will be true of two grinding at the same place and of two laboring in the field. In each case, the one who is left may not know the whereabouts of the one who has been taken. This is the rapture of the watchful believers.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEING A LIVING PERSON

We need to understand [17:21-37](#) in light of the question asked by the Pharisees in [verse 20](#). The Pharisees asked the Lord as to when the kingdom of God comes, and His answer is given in all the following verses. His answer includes all that is covered in [verses 20b through 37](#). In His answer the Lord indicates that the kingdom of God is actually He Himself in His first coming, in His suffering, in His second coming, and in His overcomers' rapture. In all these He is within us as the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not an organization or a material realm. Rather, the kingdom of God is the Son of God as life sown into the believers to grow and develop into a spiritual realm where God rules in life. Hence, the kingdom of God is a living Person. This living Person is the kingdom of God in His first coming and in His

suffering, and He will also be the kingdom in His second coming, in the rapture of His overcoming believers, and, as we shall now see, in His destroying the Antichrist.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ANTICHRIST

[Luke 17:37](#) says, “And answering, they say to Him, Where, Lord? And He said to them, Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered together.” Literally, the word “body” here signifies a corpse. This is a most mysterious verse, and I have been puzzled by it for more than fifty years. Eventually, after careful study of the Bible and the writings of others, I have concluded that this verse is concerned with the Lord’s destroying of the Antichrist.

Antichrist will be the cause of the great tribulation. Thus, it is he who will need to be judged and destroyed. As all people in Adam are dead ([1 Cor. 15:22](#)), so the evil Antichrist with his evil armies, who will war against the Lord at Armageddon ([Rev. 19:17-21](#)), is in the eyes of the Lord a foul corpse, good for the appetite of the vultures. And as in the Scriptures both the Lord and those who trust in Him are likened to an

eagle ([Exo. 19:4](#); [Deut. 32:11](#); [Isa. 40:31](#)), and the swift destroying armies are also likened to flying eagles ([Deut. 28:49](#); [Hosea 8:1](#) NASV), so the vultures here, raptorials of the eagle kind, must refer to Christ and the overcomers, who will come as a swift flying army to war against Antichrist and his armies and destroy them, thus executing God's judgment upon them at Armageddon. This indicates not only that at His appearing to the earth Christ with His overcoming saints will be where Antichrist is with his armies, but also that Christ with the overcomers will appear swiftly from the air like vultures. This corresponds to the lightning's flash in [Luke 17:24](#).

Now we have the full answer of the Lord to the question asked by the Pharisees regarding the coming of the kingdom of God. The answer is that when the Son of God came the first time, the kingdom came with Him, and when He went to the cross, the kingdom went with Him. Furthermore, when He comes back, the kingdom will come back with Him. When His overcoming saints are raptured, the kingdom of God will be there. Finally, when Antichrist will be defeated by the coming Christ, the kingdom of God will be there as well. From all this we see

that the kingdom of God is actually the living Person of the Man-Savior. Because He is the kingdom of God, wherever He is, the kingdom of God is there. Whenever He appears, He appears as the kingdom of God.

This booklet is compiled from

Life-study of Luke

© 1986 Living Stream Ministry

Please feel free to share this eBooklet with others.

See more titles in this series at

www.lsm.org/booklets.

SEE LINKS TO PURCHASE

Life-study of Luke

AUDIOBOOK • EBOOK • PRINT

Purchase *Life-study of Luke*

*Click on the badge for the format
you wish to purchase.*

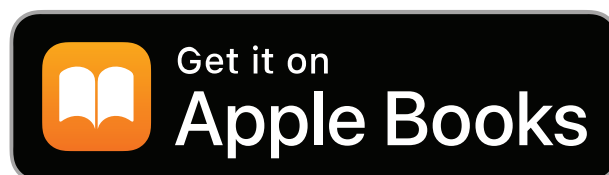
Audiobook

available at

amazon



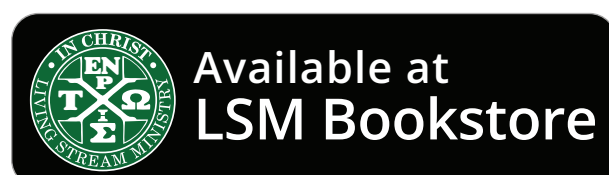
eBook



available at

amazon

Print



www.lsm.org/life-study-luke