

When the Son of Man is Revealed

Luke's Version of the "Last Days" Discourse

- 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."
- 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.
- ²³ And they will say to you, 'Look, there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them.
- 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.
- ²⁵ But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
- 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.
- ³¹ On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.
- ³² Remember Lot's wife.
- ³³ Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.
- ³⁴ I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left.
- ³⁵ There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left."
- ³⁶ *Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left*

³⁷ And they said to him, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.”

(Luke 17:20-37)

Eschatology: The Last Things

Eschatology is the study of the “last things.” That seems easy enough. However, many people think Eschatology is the study of the “end times.” This may or may not be the same thing as the “last days,” especially when it comes to current events and how people view them in pop-Christianity. And this makes the study of Eschatology more difficult. Before diving into **Luke 17:19-37**, I think it is important that we say a word about **the First Coming of Jesus**, because in fact, this is precisely how our passage on the last days in Luke begins—with the kingdom being here now.

At the time of the change in what in our calendar became the common era or the move from BC to AD, there were many expectations that the Messiah should arrive at any moment. In fact, we’ve seen Luke employ several of these expectations in his Gospel for the First Coming, not the Second. These include his probable use of the “seventy-weeks” time-

line from Daniel 9:27 in his story of Zechariah,¹ and the seventy generations between Enoch and Jesus as predicted in the book of 1 Enoch as a measure that the time had come.²

The thing is, **though there were tons of prophecies** about the coming of the Messiah, including general timelines and very specific things to be looking for, hardly anyone seems to have gotten it right, even though they were all looking for it! We could add to this not only his birth, but his ministry, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension. All were predicted very specifically in the OT. And yet, even when he told them bluntly, directly, and point-blank, **they still couldn't see** what was right in front of their eyes. I wonder then, even though I believe that the same kind of specificity is in the Scripture regarding the Second Coming if we might all be just as blind to it?

Why? Could there be a reason if this is possibly true? Perhaps **what Paul says about Jesus' death** could be a litmus test. **"None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"** (1Co 2:8). What if there is need to obfuscate the predictions in our minds as well so that the plan might work out exactly

¹ See Douglas Van Dorn, "[Nuc Dimittis \(Luke 2:21-40\)](#)," RBCNC (1-8-2023).

² See Douglas Van Dorn, "[Jesus Christ, the Son of God \(Luke 3:21-38\)](#)," RBCNC (2-5-2023).

as God has decreed for the Second Coming? Perhaps we could get enough things right and yet all of us have something wrong about how we are thinking? This makes what we are about to explore something that each of us should hold lightly to, always allowing other interpretations to at least have a hearing.

Let me return to this contrast between “[last days](#)” and “[end times](#).” For whatever reasons, some usually just self-centered and others perhaps not bad reasons at all, nearly each generation that has ever lived since Jesus ascended has thought that they are the final generation. This has literally been true since the beginning. And, of course, each generation thinks that their reasons for believing this are much better than anyone who previously thought it. The point is, when we hear “end times” we [think of ourselves](#). *WE* are living in the end times. Jesus is going to return any day now. Now, of course, he is going to return some day and so at some point, one of our generations is going to be right about it, even if it is just incidentally. And, it could be us!

When we hear the language of “end times” in this way, then when we are told that eschatology means “last days,” it is quite natural to make this equivalent to “end times,” and thus, [eschatology and the last days must by definition be](#)

only about us. And, it must mean Jesus is coming back now. It's all a very big circular argument.

But consider **Hebrews 1:2**. “But in *these last days* he has spoken to us by his Son...” The Greek is literally *ep' eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn*. You can hear the word that we derive **eschatology** from here: *eschatou* (*eschaton*). It means “last.” In other words, Hebrews is saying that they, in the NT period, *were already in* the “last days.” Eschatology had already come upon them. Peter says the very same thing on the day of Pentecost. Quoting **Joel 2:28-32**, “And *in the last days* it shall be, God declares...” In saying this, he is about to tell them that something **is being fulfilled** about the last days in their very hearing, nearly 2,000 years ago. “That I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (**Acts 2:17**). This is what happened on that very morning at Pentecost. Do you understand what this means? It means that **the last days are already here**. In my understanding of Scripture, they have been here for nearly 2,000 years.

Jesus' “Last Days” Discourse in Luke vs. Matthew

It's been a month since we last looked at Luke's Gospel. We were last in the **sixth** of the seven long sections of Jesus'

Journey to Jerusalem (**Luke 17:1-18:8**). In that passage, which had an ABA'B' pattern, the longest section dealt with what can only be called eschatology. But how are we to understand it and interpret it? This is the \$64,000 dollar question (that doesn't have quite the impact on our minds as it did in the 50's, I mean, it seems like that's how much one visit to Costco is now).

To answer this question, we need to understand several things. **First**, the way Luke writes this sixth section in that parallel ABA'B' pattern means that this passage has a literary parallel, meant to be read together with it. Since this is the A' part of the pattern, then the parallel is the A or **Luke 17:1-10**. When you read these earlier verses, you see that everything in it is to be personalized by the original hearers. “**Temptations to sin are sure to come**” (**Luke 17:1**), he says. Notice that this is a prediction about the future, and yet it very clearly isn't talking about merely some far off time just before the Second Coming. “**Pay attention to yourselves!**” he tells them (**3**). By itself, this point isn't enough to get us super far in our interpretation, but as the literary structure is almost always overlooked in our interpretations of eschatology, it is something that is at least worth noting.

Second, the core of the material here is taken from Jesus' Olivet Discourse found elsewhere in **Matthew 24:1-51** // **Mark 13:1-35**. That doesn't mean Jesus couldn't have said the same thing twice or even more, but it does mean that we should at least think to use those passages when looking at Luke. Comparing the three texts is a fruitful exercise (see the Harmony at the end of the sermon). We notice that **there are six** (perhaps 7) **verses that find nearly exact matches with Matthew** (**Luke 17:[23], 24, 26, 27, 35, 36, 37**). However, even though Matthew and Mark are much closer to each other (we'll see why in a moment... i.e. "olivet" vs. kingdom) than they are to Luke, Luke doesn't actually have a single verse that directly parallels Mark. This means that Matthew is more important for us to focus on than Mark.

There are **two more** (perhaps three: **21, [23], 31**) that are **similar enough to note**. However, they are also quite different. In the first, we have **similar language** taken from what could probably be considered **the parallel point**, but **the context is very different**. The similar language is, "**Look, here ... or there.**" But the difference is that in Matthew they are looking for someone saying they are "**the Christ,**" while in Luke they are looking for someone saying, "**Behold, the kingdom of God.**" The other is the **same language**, but it is

taken from a very different earlier part of Matthew, although curiously, the very spot where we should be in in Matthew at this point in Luke actually has the same noun—a field. But the language of that field is very different. We’ll look at what this might mean once we get into Luke’s immediate context, which is not the Olivet Discourse.

Matthew 24	Mark 13	Luke 17
<p>²³ Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it.</p>	<p>²¹ And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it.</p>	<p>²¹ nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”</p>
<p>¹⁷ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.</p> <p>⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.</p>	<p>¹⁵ Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.</p>	<p>³¹ On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.</p>

The Olivet Discourse: Two Subjects, not One

Before doing that, we first need to understand a third point. This one is about Olivet Discourse. The Olivet Discourse was preached by Jesus on the last week of his earthly

life. He enters into Jerusalem triumphant on Palm Sunday (Nisan 10). He curses the fruitless fig tree and cleanses the Temple on Monday (Nisan 11). Peter sees the withered tree, Jesus walks into the Temple where he is questioned, he leaves the temple, and then he goes across the Kidron Valley to the Mt. of Olives where he gives his famous Olivet Discourse on Tuesday (Nisan 12).

This sermon is famous for being **the most concentrated prophecy of Jesus' Second Coming**. However, Christians have taken **very different approaches** to its interpretation. I grew up thinking that the entire sermon addressed one question: *What will be the sign of your coming at the end of the age* (**Matt 24:3**). Therefore, the entire sermon addressed the Second Coming. Because of what we find in the early parts of that sermon, it is largely from this interpretation that people speculate that **a rebuilt temple** must happen in our own future in Jerusalem, that an **abomination of desolation** must be set up by the Antichrist inside of it (**vs. 15**), that Jesus is talking about the future seven year “**great tribulation**” (**21**), **the Rapture** and the thief in the night (**41-44**), and so on. This has been the Pop-Christianity understanding as talked about in such the *Left Behind* series and so many others.

What I was unaware of for many years is that another group of Christians read [the entire sermon has having already been fulfilled](#) in 70AD. They had very powerful proofs taken especially from history, especially [Josephus](#) which, in God's providence, had language that matched nearly everything Jesus predicted—at least in the first 26-35 or so verses.³ I won't go into all those here. But they exist, mark my words. Their explanation of "[this generation](#)" being literally that generation that Jesus was talking to is quite persuasive, as is I think their general exegesis of much of at least the first half of the sermon.

As I wrestled through this nearly 20 years ago as I was preaching through Matthew's Gospel, I purchased the brand new *NICNT: Matthew* volume from [R.T. France](#). In it, he makes an initial observation that I have not been able to un-see. He notices, first, that Jesus is leaving the temple and the disciples started point out the buildings of the temple ([Matt 24:1](#)). At this moment, Jesus uses this as an excuse to preface his soon to come sermon. "[You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon](#)

³ These are chronicled well in many places. See for example, [Gary Demar](#), *Last Days Madness* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991). See also couple of my sermons. "[The End is Near? \(Matt 24:1-14\)](#)," RBCNC (6-29-2008); "[Abomination of Desolation \(24:15\)](#)," RBCNC (7-6-2008); "[Jesus was Right \(Matt 24:15-35\)](#)," RBCNC (7-13-2008).

another that will not be thrown down” (2). So, Jesus is very clearly talking about the destruction of the temple that is right in front of their eyes, which we know happened in 70 AD.

As he made his way across the valley and sat down on the Mt. of Olives, with its breathtaking view of the temple and city, the disciples asked him, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (3). It is likely that the disciples thought they were asking just **one question**, as the view I grew up with presupposes. But that question very obviously dealt with the destruction of that temple, as the second view very clearly explains. However, France suggested, what if they were actually asking **two very different questions** unawares? And Jesus knew it. What if Jesus set out to answer the first question in essentially the first half of the sermon—when will these stones be destroyed, and he set out to answer the second question in the second half of the sermon—what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? In other words, what if they didn’t understand this, but these were two very different periods of time, but in the same sermon? This is something that neither of the first two views

really deals with adequately enough in my estimation. This is the view I will briefly explain here.

Importantly, we notice in comparing Matthew and Luke that Luke has no direct quote from Matthew 24:1-22 (the part about Jerusalem) and really it is only that one curious similar “Look here” quote that appears in vs. 23 that is parallel to Luke until we come to vs. 27. That’s nearly the entire first half of the sermon. Now, it does seem that perhaps Jesus in Luke 17:31 is using language that appears in this earlier part of Matthew (16-17), although as I pointed out, you could make an argument that he is only doing this because at the right point in Matthew’s parallel, he does talk about that field. The point is, Jesus in Luke 17 is not talking about the destruction of Jerusalem. He saves that topic for ch. 21.

To reinforce this point, notice how in the earlier part of the sermon in Matthew, Jesus is telling the disciples how they will know exactly when the temple will be destroyed. Do not listen to those who say they are the Christ (Matt 24:5). You will hear of wars and rumors of wars (6). There will be famines and earthquakes (7). These are birth pains (8). They will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death (9), in other words, many of you won’t make it that long

anyway. There will be many who fall away (10), many false prophets (11), lawlessness will be increased (12). We know from Paul's letters that these things happened. He says the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world (14). We know that this happened from the book of Acts.

Jesus gets more specific. He tells them that they will see the abomination of desolation predicted by Daniel.⁴ Then he tells them, “Let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (16). This is the time of “great tribulation” unknown in the world until now (21). But the point is, look at how specific it all is and that these are signs that they may know exactly when the temple will be destroyed. Now think about this. If this refers to the Second Coming, then Jesus is telling them exactly when it will happen and that they will be able to predict it and act accordingly.

Now, let's move to vs. 33, 36. First, Jesus says, “So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.” This makes it sound like Jesus is talking about his Second Coming. But as France rightly says, “Some versions and commentators translate ‘he is near,’ but there is

⁴ Luke seems to interpret this as having happened at the destruction of the Temple. “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that *its desolation* has come near” (Luke 21:20). We'll see more of this when we come to that text.

nothing in the Greek to suggest a personal subject; such a translation is suggested not by the wording of this passage but by the prior assumption that its subject is the [Second Coming].”⁵ In other words, “he” is not in the Greek. It is better to translate it as “it is near,” that is, the destruction of the temple. And Jesus knows exactly when this will occur and how and he tells his disciples what to look for and to run when they see it, which is exactly what all the Christians did when Rome surrounded the city and no Christians were murdered with the over 1,000,000 Jews who lost their lives because they didn’t believe Jesus.

But then Jesus suddenly says, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (36). So here is the all-important question. How can Jesus be talking about his Second Coming and telling everyone exactly when it will happen and then turn around and say that no one knows when it will happen? This is the question that must be answered and the only way I see that as possible is if Jesus is talking about two different things. The first, the destruction of the city, he

⁵ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 929.

knows exactly what and when it will occur. The second, his Second Coming, even he at that point in time didn't know.

It is at this point that Jesus changes to the subject and addresses their question about **the end of the age**. And it is at precisely this point that the majority of Luke's discussion is picked up (though it must be said rather than **Matt 24:36**, Luke parallels here **vs. 27**, “**For as lighting comes from the east and shines as far as the west...**” which is a verse that France sees in Matthew as an interlude, prefacing the Second Coming).⁶ This tells us what Luke is therefore concerned about.

Setting of Luke 17:20-37—The Kingdom of God

However, we have now **a fourth thing** we need to consider, which is the setting of Luke's discussion. It is **not the Mt. of Olives**. Jesus isn't even in Jerusalem yet. Nor is it a question asked by the disciples. Instead, it is the Pharisees who ask Jesus a question, not about the end of the age, but about the kingdom of God. “**Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come...**” (**Luke 17:20**). Because the whole thing starts differently, we really need to

⁶ France, 917-18.

look at Luke on its own merits and try to figure out how and why Jesus might have raised the similar topic at this point.

The Kingdom of God. This hugely important subject is really the heart of Jesus' entire earthly ministry. Everything he did either showed it or taught it. It's amazing, therefore, how messed up we Christians can still be on this subject. Some think it means a Christian nation. Some think it was a thing put on hold, separate from the "church-age." Some separate it from the kingdom of heaven, as if they are totally different things.

The essence of the kingdom is that it is a heavenly reality come to bear upon earth today. Yet, it is not any one nation, including Israel. In fact, even the church is not identical to the kingdom. The church is the door to the kingdom, which is bigger. This kingdom is not located on a map (yet). You can't drive to it in a car or fly to it in a plane. Jesus first answers them by saying, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed" (20). The ESV translation makes it sound like you can't have any way of observing it, but that flies against the entirety of Jesus' ministry. Of course it can be observed. The issue is, it is not coming with fanfare, the way you want it to. It isn't a political entity and it isn't making headlines in the newspapers.

Hendriksen puts it this way, “... as if it would arrive with loud proclamations, prancing horses, marching armies, martial music; briefly, with ‘outward show.’”⁷ You must keep in mind that most people in those days, especially the Pharisees, were looking for a political revolution. Messiah will gather together an army, destroy Caesar, and free Israel ushering in millennial bliss. Sound familiar? As Ryken says, “Many people in the church expect the same things today. They see a culture in spiritual chaos and seek a political solution—the kingdom of God established through human government. Or they speculate about the end-times prophecies in the Bible and develop a timetable for the second coming. Or they claim to have secret and specific knowledge about the end of the world. Be careful! This is what the Pharisees were looking for, too, but it is not what Jesus promised.”⁸ I agree, be careful. However, remember, there were prophecies about the coming Messiah and some of

⁷ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 805. The word here for “observed” is a hapex (found only one time in the Bible). It is elsewhere rendered as “detected with visible signs” (NLT) or “by counting days on a calendar” (MSG) or “careful observation” (NIV).

⁸ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 232.

them understood them and looked for their fulfillment. Think of Simeon and Anna.

Vs. 21 appears as a contrast to the expectations. “Nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” The word translated “in the midst” (*entos*) can mean that or “within” (KJV) or “inside.” I think “within” is probably slightly better, because elsewhere we see that it consists of inner qualities such as righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (**Rom 14:17**). But, since he is talking to the Pharisees who could not have understood this, “in the midst of” also works, because certainly others near them, such as Jesus himself, was bringing the kingdom near.

Without going into all the weeds that a discussion of the Kingdom could take us, what’s interesting to me is how the “Look ... here” does have a slight parallel in the Olivet Discourse. There, Jesus says, “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it” (**Matt 24:23; Mark 13:21**). In this way, Jesus is connecting the kingdom *to himself*. And, further, he is showing that false messiahs will arise claiming to be him, ushering in a phony kingdom.

In this way, Jesus makes a smooth transition to his disciples. **Luke 17:22** says, “And he said *to the disciples...*” So, he changes audiences. Yet, he isn’t completely changing subjects. “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” (**Luke 17:22b**). “Look, here is **the Christ!**” in Matthew and Mark becomes, “You will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man” in Luke. The subject, Christ, is the same. So why the change?

It's because in Luke, Jesus is on his way **to Jerusalem to die**. And **Luke 17:25** has a verse that is not found anywhere near the Olivet Discourse in the other Gospels. “**But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation**” (**25**). So why will they desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man? Because Jesus is about to die. This is the most immediate context for the “last days” discussion that will now ensue, and it is very different from wanting to know about when the temple will be destroyed in Jerusalem. (Though, curiously, Jesus is the Temple, so there is a metaphorical overlap!)

We need to look at this comment, “*one of the days of the Son of Man.*” To what does this refer? Some think it refers to a **day past**, such as the Transfiguration. Others, that this

was a rabbinic idiom for “the times of the Messiah,” so again probably the past. Both make sense of Jesus talking about his death. The Pharisees want to see the Kingdom, the disciples will soon want to see Jesus. Others, however, think that it means “first” (one = *mian*) where it would refer to the Second Coming (Parousia).⁹ If this is the case, then it refers to the future and it is different from seeing the “kingdom of God” more generically.

It seems to me that it must refer to the future, because in vs. 23, we have a near repeat of the “Look, here” verse (this was the “perhaps” parallels noted earlier). “And they will say to you, ‘Look, there!’ or ‘Look, here’ Do not go out or follow them.” In Matthew and Mark it is “Do not believe it.” Here, it is “Do not follow them.” But in both, it is someone in the future claiming to be the Messiah. This, of course, happened both prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and throughout the church age up until this very day.

But Jesus says that the Day we all long for will be obvious. “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*”

⁹ On these see E. Earle Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 211.

(24).¹⁰ This then seems to be the day singled out in vs. 22. Some have said that this day was in 70 AD. But this was so utterly not obvious to virtually all of Christian interpretation, that it is absurd to take Jesus to be referring to his day in judgment against Israel as the Day he is talking about here. How many early Christians though this was the Second Coming? Virtually none. Sure, that was *one of* his days. And he has many. But *this Day ... this Day* is something different altogether.

The Second Coming

Now, we have seen that Jesus told them **he must die before** they would see this day, and for them and us this is not just a parenthesis to what *really* matters. This is Luke's way of foreshadowing the climax of his Gospel and the central climactic moment of our faith. Still, Jesus' focus for the moment is, I believe, going to be on the **Second Coming**.

Jesus starts to **talk about the past** in order to **explain the future**. This is how prophecy often works. That which was predicted earlier will find a repeat in the future. And this can

¹⁰ There may be a, eschatological relationship to the Transfiguration and the falling like lightning from heaven of Baal-Satan here. But more narrowly, this refers to the sheer ferocity of the speed at which Jesus will return.

happen more than once, which is what makes unfulfilled prophecy so difficult. It's also why I think all the views need to consider one another more carefully. Perhaps we can all have part of the truth in our perspective and yet be so near sighted that we can't allow for double-fulfillments.

Specifically, he uses **the days of Noah**. “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man” (**Luke 17:26**). This is how Jesus starts off his second half of the Olivet Discourse, right after he says “**no one knows.**” Still, though we may not know the time, we can still see **some signs**.

He gets more specific. “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” (**27**). How should we interpret this? **The traditional way** is simply that people will be living life like they always have. Then, suddenly, the end comes and they are caught completely off guard—because they are thinking about anything but God. “**People simply went about their business as usual: eating and drinking and getting married and doing all the other things that people do, but never re-**

pening of their sin or putting their faith in God unto salvation.”¹¹ Thus, Jesus is warning people that his Coming will catch everyone completely off guard *unless* they are prepared spiritually, which is the point of this very teaching. It’s difficult, however, to know how this is even meaningful, since one could essentially say this about any time in the history of earth. This is always the way it is. So why use Noah?

Here is where the idea of “**marrying and being given in marriage**” may be significant. In the Noah story, this very clearly referred to the horrible situation where the **sons of God were marrying the daughters of men** (**Gen 6:1-4**) and they were giving birth to **Nephilim-giants**. Could Jesus be making **a cryptic prediction** that the days before his Second Coming might somehow mirror those evil days? I think this is a plausible conclusion, one we shouldn’t obsess over, but should definitely have in the back of our minds.

I believe this is actually reinforced by what Jesus says next in Luke. **Luke 17:28-32** essentially have no parallel in the other Gospels. In them, Jesus brings up **Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah**. Now, it is important to know that in intertestamental times, the Flood and Sodom stories were often found together in ethical teachings, including in the NT.

¹¹ Ryken, *Luke*, 237.

<i>Sirach</i> 16:7-10	<i>CD</i> 2:17-3:12	<i>3 Macc</i> 2:4-7	<i>m. Sanh.</i> 10:3	<i>Jubilees</i> 20:5	<i>T. Naph</i> 3:4-5	<i>Jude</i> 5-7	<i>2 Peter</i> 2:4-8
	Watchers						Watchers
Giants	Giants	Giants		Giants	Sodom	Generation of the Wilderness	
	Generation of the Flood		Generation of the Flood			Wilderness	Generation of the Flood
	Flood		Flood		Watchers	Watchers	Flood
	Sons of Noah		Generation of the Dispersion				
Sodom		Sodom	Sodom	Sodom		Sodom	Sodom
	Sons of Jacob						
Canaanites	Israel in Egypt	Pharaoh & Egyptians	Spies				
Generation of the Wilderness	Israel at Kadesh		Generation of the Wilderness				
			Company of Korah				

Every time those stories are found elsewhere, they very clearly have the **Watcher paradigm** in view, which means that the whole Nephilim story is in view. So that lends credence to that interpretation. If Jesus doesn't have this in mind, then he is going against the grain of all known traditions that use these stories, except perhaps the Rabbis in the

Mishnah (which post-dates him), and it is hard to believe he would side with them. This is all the more true when you consider that these are the two stories in the Bible where **angels want to have sexual relations with humans**.

Luke seems to add this because, like the others, he is also making an **ethical point** through the two stories. As this section ends with Jesus saying, “**Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it**” (**Luke 17:33**). The parallel is found in a totally different chapter in Matthew where Jesus talks about coming to bring a sword rather than peace and the one who does not side with him and lose his own life will be excluded from the kingdom (**Matt 10:39**). In other words, as you watch, be alert, be careful. Jesus told them of the coming destruction and how many actually believed? It is a call to faithful obedient living in Christ.

Here's how it goes. “**Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building...**” (**Luke 17:28**). Note that marrying isn't in this one, even though eating and drinking is, so maybe that also reinforces that strange marriages in Noah's day. “**But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all**” (**28**).

People carrying out **normal activities**. Perhaps they are carrying out **evil activities**.

Certainly they are doing it **without any consideration for God**. And then they are destroyed. Suddenly. Swiftly. Instantly. “**So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed**” (30). Revealed how? In his **Second Coming**, I believe.

Then we come to vs. 31. “**On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.**” Is this about the Rapture? No. This verse recalls **Lot’s wife**. How do I know? Because that’s what the next verse says. “**Remember Lot’s wife**” (32). She longed for life in his city and when **she turned back** in hesitation, she was turned into a pillar of salt. This is the only verse in the entire discourse in Luke that finds a parallel in the early part of the Olivet Discourse. “**Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak**” (**Matt 24:17-18**; cf. **Mark 13:15-16**), and that was talking about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

This is very interesting to me, because in it we can see very well how **prophecy repeats on earlier history**. Clearly,

the stories of Noah and Lot are similar, down to the people loving the world rather than God and being destroyed. But because this is found in the earlier part of the Olives' sermon, it refers to **the people living in Jerusalem as the armies of Rome draw near**. It was a warning the Christians took seriously. But because in Luke, Jesus is saying it in reference to the Second Coming, it means that there could very well be something similar about that coming as to these earlier ones. There were signs. People could have known. But they didn't care. They didn't watch. They didn't want to know. They loved the world too much, in whatever ways that was for them. But suddenly, Jesus is revealed and every eye shall see. Hence, again, the warning, **"Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it"** (Luke 17:33). Meaning, if you love the world, you will perish with it. If you lose your love for the world and follow Christ, your life will be preserved.

Rapture? Or Second Coming?

At this moment, Jesus says, **"I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other**

left” (34). Again, “There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left” (35). And again, “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left” (36). Like vs. 31, these are verses that are often used to support a **Pre-Tribulational Rapture**.

Recall that Matthew uses the language of “*a great tribulation*, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be” (**Matt 24:21**; cf. Mark’s “such tribulation” in **Mark 13:19**). Again, “Immediately after *the tribulation* of those days...” (**Matt 24:29**). Along with the **Abomination of Desolation** (15), these verses are used together to identify a future (to us) seven year Great Tribulation that is the stuff of fiction books and fantasy Christian apocalyptic movies. But in Matthew, I argue, these are very clearly referring to **the destruction of the temple in 70 AD**. The language is classic **prophetic hyperbole** and if you’ve ever read anything about what actually happened when Rome destroyed Jerusalem, you would know why. That day utterly changed the course of human history. Judaism was utterly ruined, until this very day. 1,000,000 Jews were slaughtered. The temple was completely and utterly destroyed. It’s difficult to find language other than this to describe such horrors.

And yet, in Luke, it seems to be talking about [the Second Coming](#). Now, notice something. I said the “Second Coming,” and this leads to an important point about how people view these events. Those who believe in the Rapture technically believe in two comings—the Rapture and the Second Coming at the end of the Great Tribulation. It’s just that one is [Jesus coming halfway down](#) to earth and we meet him in the air. Supposedly, these verses refer to that.

But it should also be pointed out that though the people are “[taken](#),” it does not say for what purpose. As France said, “It is not stated where or for what purpose the one is ‘taken.’ The analogies of Noah and Lot [may suggest](#) that it means being rescued from disaster (hence perhaps the notion of a ‘rapture’ of God’s people from the earth before judgment falls), but it could equally mean being ‘taken’ for destruction such as befell those who were unprepared in 17:27, 29. The point is that the judgment when the Son of Man appears will divide people who until that time have been indistinguishable.”¹² To rest such an already exegetically tenuous doctrine on a point that could mean the exact opposite is dubious at best.

¹² France, 281.

It also needs to be said that there is no hint here of one being taken *because they are a Christian* and the other “left behind” because they aren’t. As in any war, those **taken for slaughter are often random** (to us). Why was one left and the other taken? Why did they kill this one and let that one live? Who can say?

Finally, the point seems to be summed up in the cryptic last verse, “**And they said to him, ‘Where, Lord?’**” In other words, **where should we be looking for these things to take place?** He didn’t answer by saying, “**Look to what’s going on in Jerusalem.**” He didn’t say, “**Look for a conflict between Israel and Hamas.**” He didn’t say, “**When Iran and Turkey invade Israel...**” He said, “**Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather**” (**Luke 17:37**). In other words, “**Keep your eyes peeled**” (you can always spot where a carcass is by watching where **the vultures** congregate). In that case, it would be a call to spiritual alertness, to avoid being caught unawares by the day of the Son of Man.¹³ Now, clearly, there is complexity to what happens prior to the Second Coming. And might there be great tribulation? Might there be wars? Sure. But the newspaper eschatology is what I’m warning against. There will be wars and rumors

¹³ Ibid.

of wars, but the end is not yet. But as you see the vultures gather, stay alert. That doesn't mean, tell everyone THIS is IT! It does mean, stay alert.

As it comes full circle (recall that Jesus began this by saying that you can't say that the kingdom is here or there and now he finishes with a "where" about his Second Coming), that leads to [the main point of the discourse](#). From the point of [needing to enter the Kingdom by recognizing that it is a spiritual reality](#), a changed heart, to then the longing Christians have for [wanting Jesus to be with them](#), to then the [Second Coming](#) and that attending signs it is approaching, the point is, [are you ready?](#) Most will not be. Only those trusting in Jesus will be ready for the day when he comes to judge the living and the dead. The rest will perish. It will be too late. Are you ready? Have you turned to the Lord in faith, believing his words on his Coming?

Millennial Views

I want to end by having you consider something about these [differences of opinion that Christians have had on eschatology](#). This comment is based on something I just brought up about war near the end. As Christians have tried

to all parse out this doctrine of the “last days,” we have developed **several systems** that we usually identify with the label “millennium.” Some see Jesus **Rapturing** the church before a seven year Great Tribulation, with Jesus returning at the end of that seven years to reign on earth in for a thousand years. Interestingly, those same people believe that when the thousand years are up, Satan will be released, there will **basically be another huge tribulation**, and Jesus will finally put an end to it, judging the living and the dead and creating a new heavens and new earth.

Others believe that there will be some kind of tribulation prior to the Millennium, but there won't be a Rapture, but Jesus will come at the Second Coming and usher in 1,000 year Millennium on earth. Then, like the former view, Satan will be released, there will **basically be something like another huge tribulation**, and Jesus will finally put an end to it, judging the living and the dead and creating a new heavens and new earth.

Still others believe that the Great Tribulation basically already happened in 70 AD. For the last 2,000 years, we've been in some kind of nameless period, with good times and tribulations, but at some point in our future (unless they believe it has just recently arrived), we will go into a millennial

golden age. Then, at some point in time, there will **basically be something like another huge tribulation**, and Jesus will return in his Second Coming, judging the living and the dead and creating a new heavens and new earth.

And still others believe that the millennium has been going on since the days of the NT and continues into this very moment. Satan is bound from deceiving the nations, and he has not been deceiving them as he once did since that Day of Pentecost. At some point, there will **basically be something like another huge tribulation**, and Jesus will return in his Second Coming, judging the living and the dead and creating a new heavens and new earth.

Did you notice anything about how I put all this? About the only difference in how these views work out practically is that the first two see the Second Coming prior the millennium and the last two see it after the millennium. Other than that, **they all look same** (except that the first two views basically double the tribulation and judgment). We just label them differently. This is something I've not read a lot of theologians actually admit, but I think if you pressed them, they would agree.

To me, what this says is that perhaps our views are actually all looking at the same data much like the **four blind men**

looked at the elephant. Four blind men were minding their own business, when suddenly, an elephant came up to them. Being in four different places, each man reached out his hand and touched a different part. One grabbed the ears, which felt soft and stretchy. Another got hold of the tusk, which was wrinkly and wet. The third felt its tail, which was thin and wiry. Still the fourth touched its hide and thought the beast was hard and tough. Each man assumed the *entire* elephant was only the way he had experienced, when the fact was, it was parts of all those things.

Usually, this parable is told in a negative way, against religious relativists who think that Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and all other religions are really just talking about the same God. They aren't. And that parable is a terrible one to make that point. One could use that the same way here, and I'm not suggesting that there aren't real and important differences in the systems. Nor am I say that they all might happen. **There are logical contradictions between them. But** in this case, this story seems to me to perhaps capture the point quite well. We are all looking at the data and labeling the same data with different words. Yet, when you look at a chart, they are all essentially describing the same

thing. Yet, we fight over this, sometimes incredibly furiously. I personally think that the last position (so-called Amillennialism) makes the best sense of the data, but I recognize that others are contributing something in the discussion, things which sometimes my position doesn't take seriously enough in my opinion.

And this then becomes [a lesson from Luke](#). Luke parallels a certain part of Matthew and gives us a focused treatment on the Second Coming. But, he also has small parts that come from the earlier part of the sermon. This is because prophecy can work like this, as it repeats itself. Perhaps, if we learned to listen to one another more than fight one another, the church could learn to value all of the positions for what they offer and Christians could learn to see [their own views aren't perfectly explaining all the data](#) as they think they are. I of course think it makes sense to pick a view because whatever your view is, it has been stated in one of these positions, though you might not fully agree with it. But at the very least, this should [keep us humble](#), and isn't that really a huge part of how we prepare for the Second Coming and enter the Kingdom of God in the first place? For if we are full of pride, how can we actually see and believe in Jesus and the things he told us about things that this

side of heaven we only see as through a glass darkly? He is coming again and when the Son of Man is revealed, will you be ready?

Harmony of The Olivet Discourse and Luke's First Parallel		
Matthew 24	Mark 13	Luke 17
Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.	³ And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"	
But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."	And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."	
As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"	And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴ "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?"	
And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.	And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray.	
For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.	Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray.	
And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.	And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet.	
For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.	For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.	
All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.		
"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.	"But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them.	
And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.		
And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.		
And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.		
But the one who endures to the end will be saved.		
And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.	And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.	
	And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.	
	And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.	
	And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.	
"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),	"But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand),	
then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.	
Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,	Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out,	

and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.	and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.	
And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!	And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!	
Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.	Pray that it may not happen in winter.	
For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.	For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be.	
And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.	And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.	
		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,
Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.	And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it.	nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."
For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.	For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect.	
See, I have told you beforehand.	But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.	
So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it.		
		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.
Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.	²¹ And then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it.	And they will say to you, 'Look, there!' or 'Look, here!' Do not go out or follow them.
For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.		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.
		But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.
Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. [see below]		
"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.	"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵ and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.	
Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.	And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.	
And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.	And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.	
"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.	"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near.	
So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.	So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.	
Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.	Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.	
Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.	Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.	
"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.	"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.	

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.		Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.
For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark,		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.
and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.		
		Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot— they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,
		but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—
		so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.
<i>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.</i>	<i>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.</i>	
Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, ¹⁸ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.	Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, ¹⁶ and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.	On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.
		Remember Lot's wife.
		Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it.
		I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left.
Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left.		There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left."
Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left.		<i>Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left</i>
Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.		And they said to him, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."
Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.	Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come.	
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.	It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake.	
Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.	Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning— ³⁶ lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. ³⁷ And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."	
"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.		

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