

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 17- Luke 17:20-37

285- The Kingdom of God- Part 5

July 12, 2015

Luke 17:20-37

20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;**

21 nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

22 And He said to the disciples, "**The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.**

23 "They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after *them*.

24 "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, 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 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

- 31 "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.
- 32 "Remember Lot's wife.
- 33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it.
- 34 "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.
- 35 "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left.
- 36 ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."]
- 37 And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body *is*, there also the vultures will be gathered."

To the Glory of God

Now this morning we're going to take one final look at this discourse by the Savior concerning the Kingdom of God as recorded by Dr. Luke. And over the last four weeks- we have already learned a lot about the Kingdom of God.

We have learned that there are two aspects of the Kingdom of God:

1. The Right Now
2. The Not Yet

So, the Kingdom of God has already come in *one* sense in the first Advent of Jesus Christ- the Incarnate God. And then there is *another* sense concerning the Kingdom of God that is *yet* to come- when Jesus comes back. And we have also seen that we should see the Second Coming of Jesus in two different ways or in two different senses:

1. The Destruction of the Wicked
2. The Gathering of the Redeemed

... which is why the Return of Jesus is categorized in two ways:

Malachi 4:5

... the great and terrible Day of the Lord

And we have learned that the “wicked” who will be utterly annihilated when Jesus comes back are defined, not as only the mass murders or the pedophiles or the terrorists- but *all those* who have refused to repent and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior- along with those who went through the *motions* of repenting and yet did not follow Jesus in humble and joyful obedience- these are all classified as “the wicked” and they will all be destroyed when the Lord comes back as well.

Now the response of Jesus in verses 20&21 is addressed to the Pharisees, but His Statements in verses 22-37 is addressed to His disciples. So we are correct to think that the Statements made by Jesus in verses 20&21 are designed to rebuke unsaved hypocrites while the Statements made in verses 22-37 are designed to instruct and inform and edify believers.

So we have gone over quite a bit- so let’s pick up our examination today in **Luke 17:22**- so let’s read that verse again:

And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it."

Now this seems to be a prophecy that Jesus is making here that has at least two meanings or two ways in which it will be fulfilled. One way to see this prophecy fulfilled is that Jesus speaks here about His Ascension into Heaven which occurred 40 days after His Resurrection- which occurred three days after His Crucifixion. So we’re talking about almost a month and half in between the Death of Jesus Christ and His Ascension where there was no *public* display of Kingdom Power to the general public- but only a *private* display to believers.

You see, up until Jesus speaks these words in **Luke 17:22**- all the healings and all the miracles and all the supernatural manifestations along with all the forgiveness and all the casting out of demons was done in broad daylight in front of believers and unbelievers alike. Jesus did what He did in public- right in the face of hatred and vitriol and blasphemy and doubt and rejection- with little or no active faith at work

in the people. And, of course- we know that these signs and wonders were to give Divine Credibility to Who Jesus was- God Almighty in human flesh.

And the purpose of proving Who He was through all these signs and wonders was to shine a light on how sinful men could be forgiven and saved- not through obedience to the Law as the Pharisees had been teaching- but through repentance and trust in Him.

And as wicked sinners repent and trust in Jesus- they immediately enter into and become citizens of the "Right Now" aspect of the Kingdom of God that is invisible and eternal. And then these redeemed souls begin to watch and wait and look forward to the time when the "Not Yet" part of the Kingdom will come and the Kingdom will be realized in fullness.

But as these citizens of the "Right Now" portion of the Kingdom look forward to Jesus' Return- these redeemed souls- who have already been birthed into God's *invisible* Kingdom will languish at times- as the pagan unsaved world goes on into more and more sin and injustice and poverty and war and disease and all of the manifestations of rebellion and unbelief- including great resistance to the Gospel along with times of intense persecution against the Kingdom people of God. And so Jesus says there will be times these saved souls will sigh by reason of the heaviness of their earthly existence- and that sighing or that looking forward to what is not here yet and what they do not see yet- will do two things:

1. It will cause weak and lukewarm souls to faint
2. It will cause strong and steadfast souls to hold on and persevere

So on the one hand- truly born from above people will rejoice in their Salvation and their "Right Now" citizenry in the Kingdom of God- but on the other hand- they will long for the fullness of the Kingdom that is promised but is not yet manifested.

And so Jesus warns His disciples here not to fall into the trap of thinking that the fullness of the Kingdom of God will come through political movements or societal evolution as so He tells them in verses 23:

They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after *them*.

Our Lord warns the disciples and us here to not be moved away from what the Apostle Paul called “**the Hope of the Gospel**”. Turn to **Colossians 1** and let’s read verses **21-23**:

21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds,

22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach —

23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.

So we see here that it is *not* simply those who have initially repented or had some *emotional* experience with Jesus who are saved- but those who have received within themselves the divine nature through the miracle of the New Birth. But how do we know if God has sovereignly done that Work in our lives and in the lives of others? Look again at **Colossians 1:22&23**:

22 ... He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach —

23 if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard ...

“IF”- the biggest and most important word in the English language. Paul says here that we have been reconciled by the sovereign Work of God Incarnate- Jesus Christ- in His fleshly Body, and, therefore- Jesus Himself will present us before God as Holy, Blameless, and Beyond Reproach- “IF”. *Not* simply because you initially repented at some point in the past, *not* simply because you initially trusted at some point in the past- but that you *continued* to repent, and that you *continued* to trust, and that you *continued* in the Christian Faith- and IF- you *continued* to struggle against the lusts of your flesh by the

Power of the Holy Spirit to be humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in your daily life- all to the Glory of God.

And the unmistakable proof that you have done that and that you are *continuing* to do that- is *not* what you say, it is *not* what you lay claim to- it is that you will *not* stay weak in your walk with God, you will *not* remain as a newborn babe in Christ. The Bible says right here that you will be presented as holy, blameless, and beyond reproach *if* you *continue* in the Faith, and *if* you become firmly established and steadfast in the faith, and *if* you refuse to be moved away from the hope of the Gospel.

And I would suggest to you that part of the Hope of the Gospel is not in you getting healed or getting a new Cadillac- but in your persevering and looking forward to the final and full manifestation of the Kingdom of God at the Return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

So our strength in Christ down here right now- is *partly* determined by *how* we think about and look forward to- the Return of Jesus to this earth, and *how* that thinking continually *changes* us in our daily walk with God. So right thinking about the Kingdom of God in both its "Right Now" and "Not Yet" manifestations alters the way we live our lives. That is how important and how serious and how powerful the Kingdom of God is. Now look again at what Jesus said in **Luke 17:24:**

For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.

Now we have to understand that all the social engineering and the massive transformation and change that is going on in this country and even around the world right now is *not* brought about by a disbelief in morality- but by great and powerful belief in morality. The people who are on the forefront of all these changes believe in a morality- but it isn't a *Biblical* morality. It is a *humanistic* morality.

You see a Biblical morality assumes that all things conducted on the earth are to be done to God's Glory, while a humanistic morality seeks to do all things for the Glory of Man. So the great mystery of ungodliness is that it is *moral* at the same time it is *evil*.

For example- humanistic morality says that Government should seek to help society be more healthy and so they ban smoking. And to

them- they have instituted a very good and moral thing- the increased health of the people. And yet they allow and even encourage blasphemy against the one true living God. And so with the healthy lungs brought about through the ban on smoking- they dishonor God- which is a very unhealthy thing to do. And so while they pat themselves on the back congratulating themselves on how much they have improved the health of the citizenry- God sees them as unrepentant wicked sinners and will destroy them when He returns.

So listen, for example, to what these people are saying as they promote and sanction sexual perversity. They are using *moral* arguments to promote what God says is wicked and sinful. "*It's only love*", they say. "*How can love be wrong?*" And because so many in our culture are either not saved or grossly ignorant of what God has said in His Word- they fall for the so-called "morality" of the argument. And the net result is that their man-made morality fights against God's Divine Morality by saying that Love Personified- Jesus Christ- and those who seek to be faithful to Him and what He said- are filled with hate and discrimination. And *that* is why they won the argument.

And so Jesus says here for us not to be fooled by these man-made moral arguments. Human beings *cannot* and *will not* bring forth the Kingdom of God by seeking to make society a more moral place to live. It will come in its fullness when Jesus returns to this earth and not before. And Jesus says here in verse 24 that there will be no mistake when the fullness of the Kingdom of God comes because it will be as obvious and as brilliant as lightning that flashes across the sky. And He is *also* saying that human beings have no more control over the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God than they do with the lightning. But then Jesus brings out another aspect of the great mystery of the Kingdom of God in verse 25- let's read that again together:

But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Now this must have sounded so strange to the disciples who were standing there on that day. You see, most of the kingdoms of men are brought about through either a great military or a political victory where some great leader- who is in favor with the majority of the people- rises up in prominence and wins a battle or an election and to

the great shouts of victory and applause- he begins to rule over the newly formed kingdom.

And yet the Kingdom of God is not like that at all. The greatest Kingdom of all- the Kingdom that will absorb all of the other kingdoms- is *not* brought about through either military or political might- but through the Suffering and Rejection and Death of its King. Christianity cannot ever be defeated because you cannot kill what has already died. And you cannot stop what lives and reigns forever. And so the greatest manifestation of the invincible Power of the Kingdom of God is not in physical healing or financial prosperity or even in the transformation of human souls- but in God becoming flesh and suffering and dying and rising again. Now to be sure- the transformation of sinners into saints through the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed glorious because it displays better than anything else- the Majesty of God's Grace. And I am not minimizing that at all. I'm only saying that because God is greater than us- Who God is and what God did all by Himself is better even than what God did in us and for us.

Now at this point- in verses 26-30-Jesus turns the conversation to what is going to happen and what will be going on- on the earth when the fullness of the Kingdom of God comes- so let's read those verses again together. **Luke 17:26-30.**

26 "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

Here Jesus gives us an illustration of what it will be like on earth- just before He returns in the fullness of the Kingdom. And Jesus uses two very familiar Old Testament characters to illustrate the point He is making- Noah and Lot.

And as I said last week- the description given here is *not* that of wild drunken orgies- but of normal, everyday life. And the point that Jesus is making is that life on earth will be going on as normal- right up to the very moment when He returns and destroys all the wicked.

And I need to remind us all that the “wicked” in this case, the people who will be going about every day normal life just before the Lord comes back, are lost people. In both cases- the people all around Noah- the people he rubbed shoulders with every day, and the people all around Lot- the people he worked with and spoke with every day- Jesus is linking them here with the people who will be destroyed when He comes back. So these are unsaved people are the “wicked”- who will be utterly vanquished when Jesus comes back.

And how are these wicked, lost, unsaved people who will be destroyed when Jesus comes back- how are they describe here? Are they described as being special or unique? No. They are described as being normal and everyday people. So I want to remind us all that these are not mass murderers or terrorists or people on death row. These are not people who stand out of the crowd for extra-ordinary evil or special acts of violence. These are your neighbors and your friends and your co-workers, and maybe even your own family members.

And what is interesting here is that the two examples that Jesus used are the same in one way and yet different in another respect. Both Noah and Lot were “saved” from destruction. So in *that* way they are the same. But they are different in that one was faithfully obedient- right up to the moment of destruction while the other one was faltering. One was busy while the other one was relaxed. One was prepared and the other one was not. Noah was faithful in all his house while Lot vacillated with the unrepentant sin of his day.

Now what is also interesting is that the reference to Lot here is unique to Luke. The sister Passage over in **Matthew 24** only speaks of Noah. So the conclusion of the matter is *not* that this is a contradiction of the Scriptures but that Jesus mentioned this scenario of His Return on more than one occasion. And so to the vast crowd of both believers and unbelievers gathered on the Mount of Olives in **Matthew 24**- Jesus only mentions Noah. But in the more secret statement- when Jesus was conversing only with His believing followers here in **Luke 17**- Jesus referenced both Noah and Lot.

And so that bears pointing out. So to the vast world that contains both believers and non-believers- Jesus used the illustration of Noah- who was saved and faithful. But in the more intense Teaching of exclusively believers- Jesus also included a reference to Lot- who while maybe saved- was not at all faithful.

Now I want you to turn with me to a very important Passage that will show us more about the distinction between Noah and Lot from the very Passage that Jesus Himself was referring to in **Genesis 13**. Now you will remember that Lot was Abraham's nephew. Lot was the son of Abraham's brother, Haran (**Genesis 11:27**). Now there is no reason for us to think that Haran was saved. Terah, Abrahams' father, was a pagan- as was Abram and Haran. The whole family worshipped totem poles and prayed to false gods. But God set His Love upon Abram and sovereignly called him to Salvation, and God drew him *away* from his pagan family and *away* from his idols into a new land. And when Haran died- Lot joined in with Abram's camp.

And Abram *proved* that his conversion was real because according to **Genesis 12:7** when he was in Shechem near the oak of Moreh in the land of Canaan- Abram *ceased* the worship of idols and built an altar to the one true living God and began to worship and obey Him. And God began to bless Abram greatly. That shows us that even with little or no proper teaching- genuinely saved people will worship Jesus Christ and they will obey and follow Him. So when there is no joyful obedience- there is no Salvation.

Now back in those days- the Days of the Patriarchs- wealth was not measured in stocks and bonds- but in real estate and in livestock. And so all of the Patriarchs were very wealthy- even Job. And all those who lived with or "under the roof" of the Patriarchs were also blessed.

And this is a Biblical Principle that says that those who live "under the roof" of a believer must honor the believer and they must honor the God of the believer- even if they are not saved. And this is so true that if someone lives under the roof of a believer and does *not* honor that believer or does *not* honor the God of the believer- then that believer *cannot* lead in the House of God.

The Principle is that if a man cannot control five people- how would he lead 50 or 500? If a man- who is commissioned by God with being the "head of his house" cannot lead and command respect from his *own* family- how could he possibly think he could lead in the Church? If

the people who know you the best do not honor you- you are not qualified to lead in the Church- even though you may be saved and even though you may know the Bible. Pastors, Teachers, Evangelists, as well as Elders and Deacons, *cannot* assume this position in the House of God- even if they are called to do so- unless and until those under his roof respect him enough and respect his God enough to honor him- even if they are not saved. And if they do- they will receive a *portion* of blessings from God- even though they themselves are not genuinely saved.

And this was true with Abram and Lot. Lot was blessed beyond measure- and yet he couldn't control the people who worked for him. Let's read **Genesis 13:5-18**:

5 Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.

6 And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.

7 And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

8 So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.

9 "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if *to* the left, then I will go to the right; or if *to* the right, then I will go to the left."

10 Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere — *this was* before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah — like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar.

11 So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other.

12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

13 Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

14 The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;

15 for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.

16 "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.

17 "Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you."

18 Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Now notice that even though in verse 6 it says that their possession were so great that they couldn't dwell together- verse 7 gives us the *real* problem. Lot was so weak and so incapable of controlling those who worked for him that Abram had to separate. And then notice in verse 8 that it was Abram who *initiated* the separation.

And that tells us that it is the genuine believer who has the responsibility to initially set up the way he is going to run his home. And those who go along with those requirements will be blessed- even though they may not be saved. But it *also* shows us that it is the responsibility of the believer to then *initiate* a separation when those under the roof do *not* respect and honor the believer concerning their conduct.

Now Abram was the father of faith, and the Apostle Paul taught in **Romans 4** that Abram *believed* God, and that it was his *belief* and *not* his obedience that was counted to him as Righteousness- showing us that the Righteousness that we need in order to enter into Heaven does *not* come through our participation of the Sacraments or through our obedience to the Law. But the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ is *imputed* or credited to us by the agency of faith alone. God graciously *grants* every single elected sinner with the gift of faith. And the normal and natural *response* of having that gift of faith is that we believe. And so our belief in Jesus is *not* something that is inherent within us. It is *not* something that we initiate or that we work up or that we manufacture. Saving faith- the gracious gift of God that empowers lost sinners to believe- is sovereignly *imposed* on elected sinners by God. It is *not* given in response to us asking for it- in fact- at the time it is given- we not only don't ask for it- we don't even *want* it.

And the result of all this is- that we are saved by what we *believe* and *not* by what we “do”. We only “do” *after* we are saved. So good works or obedience to God or laboring in Holiness is *not* what earns us Salvation- it is simply the normal and natural fruit of already being saved. Therefore- our repentance and our faith in the finished Work of Jesus Christ is *not* a “work” that we “do”. It is the automatic *response* to already having been given the gift of faith.

So in **Genesis 13:9-11**- Abram gave Lot first dibs on whatever land he wanted. And this shows us the great confidence that Abram had in God. That even though he gave Lot his choice and even though Lot tried to take advantage of the situation and get all the best land for himself- Abram knew what King Solomon talked about in **Proverbs 15:16**:

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord Than great treasure and turmoil with it.

And what he said in **Proverbs 16:8**:

Better is a little with righteousness Than great income with injustice.

So Abram believed that even though his nephew was a scoundrel and wanted to fleece Abram- that God would bless him with whatever land was left. And **Genesis 13:14-18** shows us that Abram’s confidence in God was not misplaced. So even though Lot took all the best land- thinking that he was putting Abram in a bad spot- God blessed Abram anyway. And to prove that Abram would rather have God than the good land- Moses wrote this in verse 18:

Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

But then notice what Lot did with his choice land in the last part of **Genesis 13:13**:

... Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

Now the phrase “moved his tents as far as Sodom” means that the front door of his tent *faced* Sodom. So Lot “pitched his tent” toward

Sodom. In other words- this man- the nephew of the father of faith, the man who was blessed as long as he dwelled under Abram's roof, the man who couldn't control his workers and who had to eventually separate from the man of God, and the man who tried with all his heart to take advantage of Abram in the process- this man now *pitches his tent toward Sodom*. He placed his dwelling in such a way- that as he walked out of the front door of his tent every morning- he faced Sodom. This is Lot.

Now just in case somebody might think that maybe Lot was simply confused and didn't realize what he was doing- Moses wrote this in verse 13:

Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

Now this shows us that it was common knowledge that the men of Sodom were evil. So Lot *did* know. But he was blind to the sin of Sodom because he wanted the best of the land. So this is one of the very first cases where the love of money and possessions was the root of all sorts of sin. Lot's lust for possessions and wealth blinded him to great and ungodly sin.

Now the phrase “**wicked exceedingly**”, in the original Hebrew, has to do with sin that is almost beyond belief. It has to do with a manifestation of human *sexual* depravity that is unthinkable and so detestable- even back then- that it was *particularly* condemned by God. So this is *not* your average ordinary transgression. This is sin that earned the name “abomination” with God. Later on, the Apostle Paul described this very same sexual sin in **Romans 1:26&27** as “**degrading passions**” and “**indecent acts**”, and Paul was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to infallibly write that when this particular sexual sin- which is ancient- proliferates and becomes normal and common- that this is *not* a sin that is going to bring about the Judgment of God at some later time- but the proliferation and normalization of sexual perversion in a community or a state or a nation is the sign that God has already “turned a people over” and no longer restrains their sin or brings conviction to them. So when sexual aberrations become commonplace- that is the sign that God has already “turned them over”, and is *in itself* the Judgment of God upon that nation.

You see, since repentance is something that must be “granted” by God- *nobody* will repent unless God *grants* or *gives* them that ability. And so when God “turns them over” it means that God no longer *restrains* their behavior and no longer *grants* repentance. And the result is the people who have been “turned over” will go deeper and deeper into sin *without* remorse and *without* conviction, and they will be actively engaging in unthinkable sin right up to the moment that God rains down damnation upon them.

But now notice something that is absolutely staggering. Later on- in **Genesis 19**- Moses wrote this:

1 Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them and bowed down with *his* face to the ground.

2 And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way."...

So now notice that Lot is no longer in his tent that is merely *facing* Sodom- but that he is now dwelling in a house that is right *downtown* Sodom! And Lot has been there so long- that he now has the custom of “sitting at the gate” of Sodom. Now men who “sat at the gate” of cities in the ancient world were usually the *leaders* of those cities. What we would call today “The City Council” would meet at the gate of the city and make decisions and decide matters that affected the whole city. So it is very possible that Lot not only had moved into Sodom- but was now a member of the ruling leadership of Sodom- the city that was known for its unspeakable sin.

Now I want to say that it is *possible* that Lot was saved and that he was working hard to fix the sin problem of that great city. I mean after all- the Apostle Peter said this about Lot in **2Peter 2:7b&8**:

7 ... Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men

8 (for by what he saw and heard *that* righteous man, while living among them, felt *his* righteous soul tormented day after day by *their* lawless deeds),

So Peter said that Lot was “**oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men**”. And then Peter goes on to say that Lot was “**that**

righteous man” and that he “felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds.”

So it could very well be that Lot was saved and was simply *overwhelmed* or *oppressed* by all the wickedness of that evil city. And maybe Lot thought he could fix the problem, and *that* is why he moved from simply *facing* the city to living *inside* the city.

But it is *also* possible that Lot was not saved at all and was “righteous” only in the sense that he did *not* engage in those particular sins that were so egregious that he looked saved by comparison. But however it was with Lot- that is the way that sin works. Sin sucks us in. Sin beguiles us; it mesmerizes us. The Apostle Paul wrote in **2Corinthians 11:3:**

But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

... and he wrote this to saved people. So if we do not separate from it- sin will eventually become attractive to us to the point where we will defend it and live in it- even if we are saved- and eventually sin will lead us astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus Christ.

The only Biblical remedies for sin that I am aware of is for us to either overcome it, or cast it out, or repent from it, or flee from it. That’s all the choices I know. But, to continually dwell *near* sin and *with* sin will wear down our resistance to it. So to maintain a long standing association with sin- especially in our own home- will eventually cause great havoc in our life. And so the longer we “pitch our tent toward Sodom”- even saints will begin to make excuses for and justify why they do what the Bible clearly condemns. And we will wake up one morning and we will be dwelling downtown. So the wickedness that we begin to merely “face”- we will eventually live in and the sin that we first begin to simply dwell “next to”- we will eventually live inside of.

And Jesus said that this is the way it will be in the Day of His Return. Many saints of God or at least many of the people of the Church who say they are saved will be dwelling *inside* of sin; they will not only be *facing* raw sin- but they will be there so long that they are now hip deep in it themselves. And so they are compromised with the

sins they harbor in secret, and so even though they are oppressed over what is happening, and even though they are tormented by what they see going on all around them- they have no godly power, and they cannot speak out against the decline of the city, and so they sit at the gate silent- as the city descends deeper and deeper into unrestrained evil. And even though they might be saved themselves- even in their deliverance- they lose everything they have. This is what happens when the people of the Church pitch their tents toward Sodom. Now look again at **Luke 17:31-36**:

31 "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.

32 "Remember Lot's wife.

33 "Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses *his life* will preserve it.

34 "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.

35 "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left.

36 ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."]

Now I was taught when I was first saved back in the early 1970's that this part of **Luke 17** is a reference to the Rapture. And I'm certain that most of you have been taught that as well. And it may be. But I want to say something about the concept of the Rapture that most people have today in the modern Church that is completely false and completely unbiblical.

The Rapture- in whatever form it may or may not be- is *not* an escape mechanism for the American Church to use so that we don't have to go through what the overwhelming majority of all believers all over the world go through every single day and what the overwhelming majority of all the believers through the entire history of the Church have had to go through. We are so pompous and so self-righteous and so self-centered over here that we actually think that as soon as things get *difficult* here in America- that *that* is when the Church will be

raptured. And that kind of talk *deeply* offends me, and I categorically reject it and condemn it! That is *not* what the Bible teaches at all.

There are wonderful Christians all over the world right now- who love Jesus and who are fully redeemed by His Blood- who have never shopped at a grocery store, they have never owned a pair of shoes, they have never sat in an air-conditioned Church, they have never ridden in a car, and they have never known a single day when it wasn't against the law to be a practicing Christian in their country. And they are not raptured.

There are 12-year old little girls who are gang raped every day until they die that are as born again as anybody in this building; there are little boys who have been horribly burned and have had their arms and legs cut off simply for loving Jesus. I met a woman back in the early 2000's who, when she was a young girl, was given drugs in a prison in Russia that were designed to drive her insane because she was a Christian. And rather than rapture her- God used her in her drugged condition- to preach the Gospel to her jailers who themselves were saved and set her free.

So I beg you- do not ever be guilty of saying, *"They will not let us pray"*. But *after* you know that it is against the law to pray- say, *"God told me to pray and I love Him more than my own life- so I must obey God rather than Man"*. Do not ever say *"God needs to hurry up and get us out of here because things are really getting bad"*, simply because it is *beginning* to cost us something in America to practice what we preach. But rather say, *"I do not fear what Man may do unto me, but I fear God who is not only able to kill me but to also cast my body into hell fire"*.

Now I do not believe that these verses have anything at all to do with any Rapture of the Church. Because *grammatically*- that would be completely out of context with what Jesus has been talking about since verse 20. There is absolutely *nothing* in this entire Passage that refers to the glorious deliverance of God's people. Jesus is *not* talking about how the saved will be rescued anywhere in this Passage. He is talking *exclusively* about how *lost people* are going to fare when the Kingdom of God comes in its fullness at His Return. And so *contextually*- there is no reason to think that He has changed that theme in these six verses. So the most normal reading of this Passage would lead us to think that Jesus is saying that even those who are the closest to us will be

destroyed when He returns because they are not saved. They will be "taken"- not in a Rapture- but "taken" in Judgment because they would not repent and they would not bow. And to emphasize this point- in verse 32- Jesus brings up yet another Old Testament character- who was not rescued- but was destroyed- Lot's wife.

Again, there is no reason to think that Lot's wife was saved. And even though God commanded her to not look back- she loved her possessions infinitely more than she loved God- even though all she owned was connected to one of the most evil cities in the history of the world. So the attitude of her heart betrayed her and she perished. And Jesus tells His disciples to remember her. And this is a sobering warning for us today- because the prosperity and the possessions of the poorest person in this building make her's pale by comparison. Do not allow your heart to love what you have been given more than you love the One Who gave them. Remember Lot's wife.

In addition to that- there is infinitely more reason to think that Jesus is prophesying here about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the ending of the Old Covenant religious system in 70 AD than there is that He is referring to a rapture of God's people. Now look again quickly at verse 37:

And answering they said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered."

Now this is a difficult verse to figure out. The Greek here is very hard to understand. But this is my best shot. Notice here that the disciples have stopped asking Jesus "*When?*", as to *when* the Kingdom will come, and they are now asking "*Where?*". And the best context of this question is connected to the words that Jesus spoke just *prior* to them asking the question. So the disciples are asking Jesus *where* the people will be "taken" as they are swept up in the terrible Divine Judgment that will come to all those who are lost at His Coming.

The Greek construction here does *not* indicate any terror on the part of the disciples- but a legitimate inquiry as to *location*. And this probably has to do with concern for the immediate families of the disciples. Jesus just said that two people will be a bed together and one will be taken in Judgment and the other left to rejoice in the Kingdom with Jesus- so it would be normal for the disciples to be thinking about

wives and children and business partners and friends and neighbors. *Where* will the one taken in Judgment go- *where* will they be?

And surprisingly- Jesus doesn't give a straight or direct answer- but instead gives them a parable:

"Where the body *is*, there also the vultures will be gathered."

Now it is true that the Greek word translated here as "vultures" *could* mean "eagles". But that would be out of context in a literal sense because eagles do not eat dead flesh. The only reason I am aware of as to why Jesus *might* have been referring to an eagle here would be to signify the symbol of Roman authority as they would, in just a few short years, "swoop down" upon Jerusalem and leave dead bodies in their wake. Because there is no doubt that the word that was translated here as "body" refers to dead people. And by the time that the army moved on as they waved the eagle flag- Jerusalem- the City of David- was nothing but a dead carcass.

But aside as seeing this as a prophecy about the future destruction of the Jewish way of life in response to them rejecting their Messiah- the best way to understand this proverb is that the Coming of the Lord will be *obvious*- it will *not* be in secret. Every eye will see it. Everything will stop and everybody will know Jesus has come back. And so the coming of the Lord and the institution of the fullness of the Kingdom of God will- at that time- be as obvious as it is when you see vultures flying overhead- you know there are dead bodies below.

So the Kingdom of God is "Right Now", but "Not Yet". It is not coming by observation- but is already in the midst- even as Jesus stood before them. But everybody will not rejoice at the Coming of the Lord and the fullness of the Kingdom. Some will weep and die. And not everybody will know the Kingdom is coming- until after it is here. And those who have not already been born again into the "Right Now" essence of the Kingdom will be destroyed even as the people of Noah and Lot's day when the fullness comes. And some of those who will perish will be those who are the closest to us. So remember Lot's wife and love not your life- even to the death.

And do not seek to escape the suffering that is coming but rather seek to remain faithful in it. Because the Coming of the Lord and the fullness of the Kingdom of God will be obvious and it will spread out

over the whole earth and while lost people will be *forced* to bow their knees and *forced* to declare Jesus is Lord as they are judged- the redeemed are given the privilege of bowing and confessing right now- as the joy of their lives! So do not slumber, dear saints. Do not pitch your tent toward Sodom. Do not forget to pray and fast for the Return of Jesus- pray often, *"Even so, come Lord Jesus!"*

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2008- 2015 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1996 by The Lockmann Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.