The Nature of the Coming Judgement

Luke 17:34-37

October 30, 2022

All right you can open your Bibles to Luke 17. For one more look at this amazing chapter, Luke 17. And last week, we unpacked Jesus' warning, remember Lot's wife. We saw that situation of judgment, from basically the human vantage point, from a ground level perspective. And this section that we're covering today, and really what Jesus set us up for last week, is about the judgment of God. And even rem, in remembering Lot's wife, we remember that she was married to a righteous man and the righteous man and his daughters were saved. And the wife was not saved. She turned back and she was turned into a pillar of salt, she was caught up in the judgment on Sodom because her heart was attached to the people and to the place.

I'm reminded as I hear the testimonies in the waters of baptism this morning, and two very different people coming from very different backgrounds and situations and circumstances and yet, you see the Lord, as we prayed this morning as elders and just give thanks for all the we heard, we see that the Lord's

arm is not too short to save. He is able to reach into every situation, in every circumstance and reach down to find his own and save them and pull them out before judgment comes.

His grace reaches his people. And he is meticulous in his salvation, specific in his choosing, in his selection. It's not just an offer that's general and vague, but it is a salvation that is particular, it is a salvation that is specific, selective and he will accomplish what he sets out to do.

We see that in salvation, we also see that in judgment, and this passage is about the coming judgment, a judgment that is meticulous, a judgment that is selective, a judgment that will make a distinction between the righteous and the unrighteous, between the godly and the ungodly, a distinction between God's true people, and those who are not.

So it behooves us to listen very carefully to a passage that for the ungodly, and for those who are self-assured falsely so, those who may be self-deceived, it's a passage that we need to hear, through the ears of warning. We need to hear Jesus' words here as a warning, to those who are as we talked about, the almost Christian. Those who will almost be saved, but will be eternally lost.

For the Christian this passage is a great encouragement, because we see our God and his justice and his righteousness vindicated. We see our God high and lifted up, we see his righteousness and his truth prevail, and that's just the beginning of an eternity of rejoicing in him. And so for the Christian this passage is good news. And for those who are almost Christians, for those who are know they're lost, this passage is a great, great warning.

We saw the drama unfold in what we covered last week about Lot's wife. That drama unfold about, you know, basically call, if it were a movie, it would be, The Escape from Sodom. We watched Lot's wife though in the escape from Sodom, which was a good story and seeing Lot and his family rescued, we watched her do the unthinkable.

Watch Lot's wife turn away from the city of refuge and prefer the condemned city, that's painfully obvious that she never dealt with her heart. While she had time, while the Lord's patience waited, and stayed his judgment and held it back, waiting for that day when he knew he would judge, she never dealt with her heart. She never looked carefully at her thinking. She never thought about her thinking, she never really examined herself.

She continued on in self-deception, but it came a day, a day of God's judgment, that the heart of Lot's wife was exposed as her final day, and the lesson became memorialized in a pillar of salt. She was revealed to be a woman who loved the world, a woman who loved the things in the world, who loved the people of the world, and whatever she claimed, she did not love God.

"Love not the world," John says, "Neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all the time in the world- the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life- is not of the Father but as of the world. And the world is passing away and also it's lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever." Remember Lot's wife is an illustration of that passage in 1 John 2:15 and following. It's an illustration, it's a warning, do not remain attached to this world.

Don't remain attached to this world, because if you do, you will pass away with this world and its lusts, which God is going to judge. Make no mistake about that. As we come into the final section of Luke 17, Jesus returns to talk about this judgment and get more specific, to outline characteristics of the coming judgment. And so the lens widens out, is ver, narrowly focused

on Lot and his wife and his situation there in Sodom and now the lens widens out, so we see a broader perspective.

The judgment upon the wicked world in Noah's day, upon the wicked cities in Lot's day, they point to, don't they? A meticulous, a discriminating judgment that's going to take place. Again, when the Son of Man comes, his judgment will search out each and every single person, his judgment will seek and search out every single place. And his judgment will do that all at once, at the very same time, and everybody will be exposed.

His judgment doesn't just come as a big sledge hammer mashing everybody who's not his, but it comes with a scalpel, to cut and dissect and to pull apart and distinguish and then the sledge hammer comes. Jesus says in Luke 17:34, "I tell you in that night," What's he talking about, what night? He's talking about the night of Christ's return. He's talking about the event known as the Parousia, the second coming.

He says, "I tell you," verse 34, you can read it there. "In that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There will be two women grinding together." and "one will be taken and the other left. And they," that is his disciples, who are listening, "They said to him, 'Where Lord?'

He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."

Jesus describes two kinds of people here, only two kinds, those who are taken and those who are left, those who are taken like Noah and his family, like Lot and his daughters, God takes them, he removes them and they escape the wrath of God's judgment, those left behind, they will endure the wrath at his coming. That's a prelude to the ongoing wrath that will take place in the eternal judgment in hell.

Now this distinction between the two kinds of people this, this description of the end that Jesus has just given. This is either very good news, that is, if you're among the few who belong to Christ, or, or it's very, very bad news, if you're among the many who make the fatal mistake that Lot's wife made of loving the world, of loving the things in the world and thinking they're just fine with God, that I like my life.

I like my friends, I like the way everything's ordered. I like, I like it, I don't want to think about it. People like that, this day is going to be absolutely tragic for them. Tragic for those who, like Lot's wife, were only superficially connected to the godly. Almost Christians, those who think they're saved, but they really are self-deceived. On the day

Christ returns, they will be left behind, they will be swept away in judgment, and they will be eternally damned. "It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

So today, we're going to look at six characteristics of coming judgment, six characteristics of coming judgment, we'll see them in two sets of three, set of three there in verses 34 and 35 or 36. Obviously, we said that, that doesn't, that's not in the text, that's a, that's an addition to the text that doesn't belong there. So we skip out, skip that, if that's in your Bible. First set of three characteristics in verses 34-35.

Second set, you know kind of the break there with the disciples' question that's in verse 37. But all six characteristics of coming judgment. They will provide a deep sense of encouragement to the saints, for all those who love the father and not the world. For all those who love his righteousness and not the lusts of the world.

Great encouragement for us as saints, because our salvation is not a matter of escaping what we don't like, and walking on streets of gold and getting into a life of ease and comfort. It's not about that. Our salvation is all about God being glorified. We rejoice to see his righteousness prevail, we rejoice to see Christ recognized for who he truly is. When that

happens, we will be, our joy will be made full, our reconciliation will be complete, our redemption will be complete.

At the same time, all six of these characteristics of coming judgment provide a strong warning to any who, like Lot's wife, still love the world. Who're still entangled in the world, whose hearts are still dull to the truth. Their hearts are still numb, still unawakened.

So first set of three, here in verses 34 to 35, three characteristics of coming judgment, we're just gonna number these all the way through, one through six. Number one, the coming judgment is unpredictable. Here's the first point for your outline. If you're writing down notes, number one, the coming judgment is unpredictable. If you just want to scribble ahead in your notes, it's going to be the coming judgment is, the coming judgment is, all the way down. So you can just fill in one word. The first one is unpredictable.

Jesus says in verse 34, "I tell you", when he says, "I tell you", he's conveying certainty, yes, "I tell you," I say to you, but it's conveying also emphatic concern. It's not just certainty, it is that, but it's an emphatic because he's got a great concern that you get this. I want to get your attention.

Listen to me. It's like he's clapping his hands. He's snapping his fingers, pay attention. "I tell you, in that night, there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. There'll be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left."

Sleeping, working, he has portrayed perfectly the mindset of people who are alive, at his coming. We look back to Noah, we look back to Lot, they were eating, they were drinking. They're just doing the regular things in life, eating, sleeping, or working. He takes everyone by surprise, his coming is unpredictable. It's like a thief in the night. It's coming, it's unpredictable. And it's so utterly unpredictable and unexpected, is Christ coming, that two people will bed down together for the night, they will get comfortable, they will be sleeping.

Two women will be just doing their regular duties in the day, preparing together for that day's meals. They have no idea of what is about to hit them. They don't know whether the coming of the Son of Man is going to come at night while they're sleeping or during the day while they're engaged in the day's work. Christ's coming therefore will catch everyone completely unaware.

As Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night while people are saying there is peace and security. Then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman and they will not escape." Where did he get that? He got that from the Olivet Discourse, you can, quick enough, you can turn over to Matthew 24 briefly, but it's a significant section, chunk of Scripture I'll read, but what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5 comes from Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24. I mean number of sections we'll come to, but in specifically in verse 38.

This kind of comports with what we've been reading Matthew 24:38, "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, and they were" here it is unaware, "unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; and one will be taken and the other left. Therefore, stay awake," he says.

"For you do not know what day your Lord is coming. 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. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Another word for that, unpredictable.

The coming judgment is unpredictable precisely because God delights in his justice being met, allowing people to do whatever it is they're doing, and then coming upon them to recompense them for their deeds. He recompenses both the righteous and the wicked in the day they least expect it.

First characteristic of coming judgment, it's unpredictable. Second characteristic of coming judgment, number two, the coming judgment is unavoidable. The coming judgment is unavoidable. Again verse 34, "I tell you in that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken the other left, there will be two women grinding together, one will be taken and the other left." The transitive verbs in those verses. Transitive verbs express some kind of an action upon an object. So which verbs are those?

The verbs taken and the verb left, repeated twice. There in the passive voice, so it's, to be taken, or to be left, to be left behind. Those are the transitive verbs, expressing action upon a subject and when the action here upon the object, that's

the people, the people will be caught up in whatever their fate is, whatever the outcome is, it's going to happen to them. It's unavoidable. They're passive participants, you could say, in the judgment.

Just a quick point of clarification, some wonder whether being taken means to be taken in judgment or may be taken in salvation, and then does being left behind, mean being left alone, that is not falling under judgment. Well, the terms themselves really can and depending on the context go either way. But that's, that's the key, isn't it? To interpret all terms by the context.

So what's the context show, in the days of Noah, right? Verses 26-27 Noah was taken away by God's mercy, in a manner of speaking, he's removed from the judgment in the safety of the ark, that's what it is to be taken away. Rest of the world, where were they? Left behind, left to die in the judgment of the flood. Same thing in the days of Lot, verses 28-29, Lot, also he was taken away by the mercy of God, quite literally, as the angels had to seize him, his wife, his two daughters, as Genesis 19:16 says, and bring them out of Sodom, sending them outside of the city, and the rest of the city that is left to divine judgment.

"So it will be," Jesus says Luke 17:30, "So it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed." So the righteous, they are, *paralambano* is the verb, they are "taken away" here, re, meaning removed from judgment, spared by God's mercy. They are those who ready themselves for the end, now. They prepare their hearts now, for that day. It's planning ahead like Noah, like Lot, and they will be taken away to safety. On the other hand, the unrighteous they are left behind, to be caught up in the judgment left behind to die, the verb of *aphiemi*, here in this case, meaning to be abandoned, to be let go, to be given up to judgment.

So to all those who are lazy, to the all those who couldn't care less, to the all those who are self-centered or disobedient, or to all those who are lovers of false doctrine, lovers of doctrine that makes them feel more at ease, more comfortable, doctrine that doesn't trouble them so much, they too will be left behind to die in judgment, like the world of Noah's day, like the people of Sodom.

So as it was in the days of Noah, as it was in the days of Lot, the coming judgment will happen to those who were living on the earth at that time, no opting out of the coming judgment, no choice exercised at that time for those who are alive at his

arrival. So we can say that this coming judgment is compulsory. It's a reality that's forced upon the world. We had our dear friends in Cape Coral, Florida, at Grace Baptist Church, Tom Ascol and his, his church there, they didn't have any options when Hurricane Ian passed through.

Wasn't like they could say, you know, rather the hurricane doesn't come here. Maybe pass south of us safely between Cuba and Florida, and peter out at sea. They just had to endure what was coming, endure what God had sovereignly planned for them. That's the way coming judgment is going to be. You don't have options. It's forced upon you. What are you going to do about that?

People who face hurricanes coming, they leave town or they board up the windows or they get to high ground and they take all kinds of precautions, not just for when the hurricane hits, for, for life after they take precautions. What do you do now, for that inevitability of coming judgment then? Judgment is going to happen to the world. It'll have no regard for people's will at that time. I mean the, the will of a human being against a hurricane, does it matter? Guy looks pretty foolish standing out on Captiva or Pine Island saying, Stop! Just be blown away with the trees.

Judgment's gonna happen to the world without regard for their wills, without regard to their feelings, which have become in our day so sensitive, so weak, and thin skinned. Judgment is going to happen, regardless of people's desires. When God's justice comes, it comes without mercy. And it's an inflexible, inexorable, unstoppable force. No one avoids it.

So the coming judgment is unpredictable, unavoidable, and thirdly, number three, in your outline, the coming judgment is individual. Coming judgment is individual. And I think that's what strikes your eyes as you read verses 34-35 immediately, right? It's individual, "I tell you in that night, there'll be two in one bed." You can't get closer than that, physically speaking, right? Two in one bed, one taken, the other left. Two women are grinding together, and one will be taken and the other left. We hear that saying all the time, don't we? Blood is thicker than water. There's nothing closer than family ties, in a human sense, I mean, that's true. Family is very close, but not then.

Human connections will count for nothing on Judgment Day, sharing the same bed, whether that refers to a husband and wife, which is most probable here or could be two other members of the family like siblings, who are wrapped up in one bed, warm,

comfortable, tucked in for the night. But intimate family relationships and proximity, close proximity will not matter on that day. The Judgment will take the one and leave the other to judgment.

Two women, they're using a hand mill to grind that day's grain so that they can bake that day's bread. One woman, the way this worked, one woman pours the grain into the mill and the second woman is cranking the hand mill and the flour comes out the other side. So as you might imagine, women who do that day after day, after day, they gotta get along, don't they?

So they get along, they create bonds over time. These two women are inseparable friends. That's the picture here. As close work and close partnership creates friendships over lifetime. Those close bonds created by daily work, they're not going to matter. Connections of family intimacy, connections of deep friendship, connections of common enterprise, whether work or business interest to include, we can expand this out to any temporal earthly interests.

We can even describe this as a ministry interest, religious enterprises, religious outreaches and ministries as well. Any bonds that are created and formed and developed and deepened over time, here, all this in temporal, in this life, all those

earthly connections will be severed on Judgment Day. As a surgeon's scalpel, can find the deepest connections of tissue and divide them up, so God's justice will sever human connections, and deal individually with sinners.

Frederick Godet puts it this way. He says "A selection will take place at that time." And he says, "It's a selection which will instantaneously break all earthly relations, even the most intimate and from which there will arise a new grouping of humanity and two new families or societies, the taken and the left." End quote.

So when the Son of Man returns, he conducts his judgment based on righteousness, based on justice, based on what your deeds deserve, what your thoughts have merited. What your desires and your, where your affections have gone. It's carefully selective, it's detailed, it's meticulous.

When judgment comes, it comes on an individual basis. And all that matters on that day is, do you belong to Christ or do you not? Are you known by him or are you not? You can claim whatever you want to. "Many come to me on that day," Jesus said, "And they'll say, 'Lord, Lord.'" They're outward professors of religion, but I'm gonna say, "Depart from me, you workers of

iniquity. I never knew you." What matters on that day is does he know you? Has he known you? Are you one of his?

As I said, each of these characteristics provides warning as is really the theme here. It's a warning, but it's also an encouragement to the righteous. There's an encouragement for us who are saints, but there is a warning to the ungodly, a warning to the disobedient, a warning to all who are self-deceived in hopes that they will give up their self-deception, and they will pay attention for once in their life.

And listen, you see these things come together over in Revelation 22:10 and following. So I'd like to ask you to turn there briefly to Revelation 22, end of your bibles. If you get to maps, you've gone too far. So just turn back a couple of pages and just see this illustrated.

Actually, we can back up to verse 7 in Revelation 22, the angel tells the Apostle John here, starting in Revelation 22:7 that the risen, ascended, soon returning Christ says, "Behold, I'm coming soon, blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." And then look at this, in, starting in Revelation 22 verse 8 and following, "I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to

me, but he said to me, 'You must not do that! I'm a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’"

Pausing here for a moment, we heard in the testimony of baptism, coming out of Catholicism, and Catholicism actually encourages the praying to saints. Don't worship angels or saints or humans or anything, you worship God. Verse 10, “he said to me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.’” Let, here it is, “‘Let the evildoers still do evil, and let the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the Holy still be holy.’"

In other words, let the bad keep behaving badly. Let the good keep doing good. Be who you are, he says, go ahead, be yourself. Part of the design in Christ's unexpected coming is to catch people unaware, to catch people being themselves, to catch them doing exactly what they naturally do, exactly what they want to do. Being who they are, and acting in accordance with their true nature.

And for the evildoer and the filthy, for the morally vile catches them in the middle of his behavior. It's going to illustrate the need for the justice. It's gonna highlight the demand for recompense. God asks in Jeremiah 23:24, "Can a man

hide himself in secret places, so that I cannot see him? Declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? Declares the Lord." Rhetorical question. Yeah, he fills heaven and earth.

I think Chuck Palmer was talking about God's omnis', his omniscience, he knows everything, he sees everything. His omnipresence, he's everywhere at once, because God is invisible spirit, but add the other one, omnipotent. He's all powerful, what he sees and where he is, knowing all things, he has the power to exact justice.

Don't trifle with the living God. Can a man hide himself in secret? I can't see him. Come on. What about for the righteous? What about for the holy, same thing? Lord loves to catch the righteous, doing right. He loves to come upon the saints doing saintly things, doing saintly deeds. So he can say to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Gives him great pleasure. It's what we read in 2 Chronicles 16:9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him."

That is what he rejoices to do. Jeremiah 17:10, "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind to give to every man according to his ways, according the fruit of his deeds." He's a God who is meticulous in doling out justice. That's why Jesus

taught in the Sermon on the Mount Matthew 6:1 and following. He said, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. For then you'll have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."

So he says, Matthew 6:3 and 4, "When you give, give in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. When you pray." Verse 6, "Go to your room, shut the door. Pray to your Father who's in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." "When you fast," Verses 16-18, disguise your fasting don't put it on display. Hide your suffering, hide your hunger, hide your sorrow, "and your father again who sees in secret. He will reward you."

Notice the will, in those sentences, he will reward you. You say I haven't been rewarded for all my righteous deeds. Oh, yeah, you have. Yeah, you have, promise is right there. The promise is there, it's as good as gold, he will reward you, he will visit you with the proper recompense. So the coming judgment is unpredictable, precisely because God delights in justice. It's unpredictable.

This will be the beginning of the end, when God in Christ recompenses all people, both the righteous and the wicked. And it comes on a day when they least expect it, again go back to

Revelation 22:11, and continue reading, he says, "Let the evil doer still do evil. Let the filthy still be filthy. Let the righteous still do right and the holy still be holy." Just be who you are.

"'Behold,' verse 12, 'I'm coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he's done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' Blessed are those who wash their robes, So they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates." He's coming. And he's gonna recompense each one according to his works, according to what he's done.

His judgment is individual. It's utterly impartial. It's without any prejudice. Those who have washed their robes, robes white and clean in the cleansing and the purifying blood of the Lamb of God, all their sins have been forgiven, they're granted the right to become children of God, and to eat of the tree of life, and to enter in the eternal city by the gates. But look at verse 15, "Outside are the dogs, outside are the sorcerers, outside are the sexually immoral and the murderers and idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

That last expression everyone who loves and practices falsehood. Falsehood is a word *pseudos*. That is to say it's a

lie, it's a deception, often referring to false doctrine and error. Listen, some people love error. We have a world full of people who prefer lies to the truth. They want to rewrite history. They want to shade things according to their current preferences and ignore whatever, whatever evidence doesn't fit. They love lies, prefer lies to the truth. They refuse to repent of false doctrine.

They refuse to submit themselves to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But inside, each one inside the city, each one who loves righteousness, each one who loves holiness, each one who pursues righteous and holy things, each one who does righteous and holy deeds, each one who loves and obeys truth, even if it cuts them to pieces, but they love the truth. Each one of those individual people will enter into his rest.

Listen to this, you can turn back to Luke 17. But listen to this from Romans 2:6-11. Paul writes there that "God will render to each one according to his works; to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and who do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every

human being who does evil for the Jew first, and also for the Greek, but glory, and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality."

He's impartial. So verses 34-35. First three characteristics of coming judgment. It'll be unpredictable, unavoidable, and individual. No one can or will predict it, no one can or will escape it, every single one will be subject to it. Now as we come to verse 37. Remember, as I said, verse 36, it's not original to the text, it's a scribal edition, most likely a marginal note inadvertently made it into one of the subsequent copies of the text, so we disregard that.

But coming to verse 37, the disciples asked Jesus a question, in response to what he's been teaching here at the end. They say "Where, Lord?" Where? Pharisees asked a similar question, didn't they back in verse 20. It's a question about timing, about when the kingdom of God would come and the disciples asked in verse 37, not about timing, but about location, about where the Son of man would come, about where the judgment would happen, where, Lord?

Now you may be thinking to yourself, wait, didn't Jesus already answer that question, the where question, back in verse

21 or back in verse 23? Mean didn't, didn't he basically say we ought not to be asking that question? So why are they asking? Are the disciples really not listening well? Is it that they're being a bit obtuse here? Like they can tend to be, or something else going on?

When Jesus answered the Pharisee's question about the Kingdom of God back in verse 21, he said, "It's not a matter of the kingdom of God, is not a matter of look, here it is, or there, for behold, he says, the King is here right now." So it's not about here or there. It's here because I'm here. He wants them to focus not on the trappings and the organization and the politics and the military might of the coming Kingdom. He wants them to focus on the representative head of that kingdom, who is the king, Christ right there. So the point is to locate the kingdom with the presence of the king. That's the point there.

When Jesus turned to his disciples to make, in verse 22, he makes another point of clarification there in verse 23. He warns against anyone who says, look here or look there. He says, turn away from people like that, turn away from people who are trying to get you to, get the date right and look at all the signs and pointing to, you know where Christ is. And he's showing up out there in the desert, or he's showing up here in an inner room,

he's appeared to me in a vision, in a dream, just turn away from people like that, because they're deceiving you. They're distracting you and why is that?

Because when the king arrives, when the Son of Man comes, verse 24, there is going to be absolutely no doubt, verse 24, "For as the lightning flashes, lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day." Arrival of the king in the kingdom can't be missed. It's a universal event. From that point on, from there in the text onward, Jesus describes the time and the place that he would find when he returns, it'll be a time of great sin.

It'll be a time of widespread corruption as it was in Noah's time, the place will be filled with sin throughout the entire world, looking a lot as it did in Lot's place in Sodom. So the time and the place, the season and the location, it's a time of great sin. It's a world of significant spiritual evil, and in every place. And that's why when the Son of Man comes again, he is coming in judgment, and it happens everywhere because it's needed everywhere.

Which brings us back to the disciples' question, they want to know if there's any specific location for the judgment, perhaps they're wondering if this will be an Israel only thing?

Or is this going to take place also among the nations, all the nations who have persecuted Israel, or both? What's gonna happen? They can look back to Jesus' examples and see the judgment in Noah's time, that was worldwide. So they can have that expectations worldwide.

But then, but then Jesus talked about Lot and the judgment in his time, that took place in a specific location, which they had probably traveled through and seen, there in the south end of the Dead Sea. The judgment was particularly to Sodom and Gomorrah; it was localized there in the cities in the plain. So maybe, mix, makes a bit more sense. Maybe they're not being obtuse here. Maybe they're not being dim witted or anything. They're, they're actually, it's a good question. Makes sense when they asked in verse 37, "Where Lord," He says to them, you're not going to miss it, "Where the corpse is there, the vultures will gather."

With that let's continue our outline. We said the first three characteristics, the coming judgment will be unpredictable, unavoidable, individual. Here's a fourth for your outline. Number four, the coming judgment is visible. Coming judgment is visible, simple point, I know. But it's there in the

text "Where the corpse is there, the vultures will gather." That's really what he's trying to say. It's going to be visible.

JC Ryle, he calls this statement in verse 37. This answer from the Lord, he called, he refers to this as, "A dark and mysterious saying that has greatly perplexed the commentators." Dark and mysterious, he himself has an answer, a view point to this text, but it is true that in my surveying of the different commentaries and commentators, there is a bit of difference of opinion on this verse and why Jesus said it. And one reason for this sense of a dark mysterious saying is kind of maybe how grim the picture is of a, you got, you got a picture here of vultures gathering around, feeding off of dead bodies.

It's kind of gross, you know, kind of eerie. And maybe here around the time of the Reformation Day, I don't know why it's connected, but kids going out for candy and stuff. There's all these kind of ghoulish displays in people's neighborhood yards of horror scenes and all that kind of stuff. And maybe you might see a vulture hanging around a dead body there. That's kind of brings this and you wonder why is Jesus speaking in some, such ghoulish terms?

In a judgment context, though, considering many other passages in Scripture that describe judgment, not only is this

saying justified about dead bodies, birds feeding. Not only is it justified, but it's actually a relatively mild saying, as we'll see little, a little bit later. There's another reason though for the, maybe the perplexity of the saying, is that the word translated vultures here.

It can also be translated, eagles. So is it eagles or is it vultures? Jesus literally says, Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered. Or perhaps it's, there the eagles will be gathered. The Greek word *aetos*, can refer to either bird of prey, a vulture, or an eagle. And really, any bird that's in that family of birds of prey is included in that term.

In fact, Israel, that land of Israel, is a kind of a center point for migrating birds up and down that entire area, east to west, and north, and south. So birds like eagles, and vultures, and all kinds, you know, bearded eagle. I don't know, bald eagles, a black eagle, and just all different kinds of eagles are flying through that area.

So we know, what we know for certain about this saying, which Ryle calls dark and mysterious, is Jesus talking about something physical, isn't he? Talking about something visible. It's not dark, it's clear. It's not mysterious, it's obvious. Just as birds of prey, with very sharp eyes, can see the dead

body below. Just as we can see birds of prey flying up above. So the bird spotting the body and we spotting the birds, coming of the Son of Man and judgment is going to be a visible thing.

You want to know where it's going to happen? Well when it happens, anybody who looks up and looks around, they will know exactly where. Let's take up the question a little bit further here. Ask the question, is it vultures or is it eagles? What is the term? How should we translate this? What should we picture when we see this verse, vultures or eagles? And then maybe a second question, who cares?

Why does it matter? And I think it does matter. So if you'll just stick with me a little bit, we'll see why it matters. The ESV obviously, in our translation, has chosen vultures. It implies the body here, the word is *soma*. So where the soma, the body is, and here it implies that the body is a dead body. It's a corpse because there are vultures there.

The New English Translation, the NIV also translated the word, dead body, even the NAS, which is a very literal translation, translates the word *soma* as a body, and translates this word, the plural, *aetoi*, as the vultures, and it strongly implies that the body is dead. So if the body is dead, this vulture imagery seems to fit really well. Over in the Olivet

Discourse, Jesus gave the same saying there, Matthew 24:28, you heard it as we read it. In that case, he used the specific word for corpse, which is *ptoma*. It means dead body, it means carcass.

So by parallel, we see the body is dead. It's a corpse. And so vultures makes sense for the translation and many of the modern popular translations, ESV, CSV, NAS, LSB, the NET, the NIV, the NRSV, they all translate this term, *ho aetoi*, as the vultures. However, I checked some other translations, and it started back with the King James Version, 1611, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." That's interesting. Went further, check the RSV, the ASV, the YLT, The Young's Literal translation, the DBY, the John Nelson Darby translation, all of those translations which are not predominant and not popular translations, but they chose to translate *ho aetoi,* as the eagles.

So there's fairly, well represented options on either side, vultures and eagles. One commentator I came upon, took up this question in great detail. His name's James Edwards, he makes a compelling case that eagles is the correct translation here. He knows the use of *aetos* in classical Greek literature, and there are five occurrences of it in the New Testament. Two

passages are the ones that are in question, so Luke 17:37, Matthew 24:28, but there are three uses of this term in Revelation: Revelation 4:7, Revelation 8:13, Revelation 12:14.

All three of those clearly, eagle is the preferred translation. The case seems to be just a little bit stronger than for translating *aetos* as eagle rather than vulture in the Bible. If so, why do some translators still prefer vulture to eagle in these texts? In Luke 17, and then the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24?

Well, according to Edwards, it's because they have believed, mistakenly so, that Eagles do not come together, as is described here, that they don't fly in groups, as is implied here, and they don't eat carrion, dead bodies, corpses. I'm no ornithologist, but I checked his claims in a few places on the internet, and it turns out, as he said, eagles can come together and fly in groups and eat dead things. Perhaps we should consider eagle as the best translation that where the body is, there the eagles shall gather. Who cares?

I mean, why does this matter? I mean, if birds of prey are feeding on dead bodies, does it really matter, if it's an eagle pecking at your corpse, or if it's a vulture, I mean, isn't the outcome pretty much the same? Doesn't Jesus' point stand that

when judgment happens, you're gonna know. Results pretty much the same either way, right? It may be all the same to us. Reading in the 21st century, here in the States, where we have great burial practices and we don't see this kind of imagery all the time.

But for these first century Jews, when they heard Jesus say, *ho aetoi*, the picture that comes to their minds, is not a scene of clumsy vultures hopping around and picking apart dead bodies. What they thought about, when they heard the word eagles, is they thought of the swiftness of the eagle; its power, its majesty, its fierceness.

So, this is a metaphor for them, about the speed, and the strength, and the ferocity of coming judgment. Eagles, they can fly great distances, soar at great heights, powerful in flight, sharp, piercing in their vision. They have the appearance of wisdom when you look at that majestic bird and you see, it's, it's no wonder we chose eagles as our national bird. They have the appearance of wisdom, their sharp eyes discriminating in judgment. They swoop down from on high, they dive through the air at great speeds, an eagle attacks its unsuspecting prey and catches it unaware.

Interesting to see in Old Testament imagery, how God used different animals to portray different aspects to judgment coming upon Israel and Judah. And there are a couple of places where he used eagle as a metaphor to portray judgment. One, the judgment on Israel, the northern kingdom, judgment coming from Assyria. It says in Hosea 8:1, "Set the trumpet to your lips! One like an eagle looms over," or comes against, it can be translated, "looms over, comes against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law."

Eagle of judgment is coming. It's hovering, it's up there, you don't know what's gonna strike, but it's coming. He used the eagle, God used the eagle as a metaphor again to portray judgment of Babylon on the southern neighbor, Judah, on that kingdom in Habakkuk 1:6-8. So the Assyrians, they judge the northern tribes, like swooping in like an eagle, but judgment on Babylon against Judah. "Behold, I'm raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who marched through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.

"They are dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves. Their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves; their horsemen

press proudly on. Their horsemen come from afar; they fly like an eagle swift to devour." Jeremiah lamented over that very Babylonian judgment upon Judah in Lamentations 4:19, saying, "Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the heavens; they chased us on the mountains; they lay wait for us in the wilderness."

They were birds of prey, and they got us. What happened literally, to the northern kingdoms, and the northern kingdom of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah, what happened to literally, what happened visibly? Same swiftness and ferocity that they experienced historically, the same swiftness and ferocity is going to be experienced eschatologically, visibly, and literally, when the Son of Man comes again, that's point number four, the judgment is visible.

Here's a fifth characteristic of the coming judgment. The coming judgment is universal. The coming judgment is universal. Again, Luke 17:37, the disciples ask where Lord, he says to them where the body is, and I'm just going to use eagles here. So the Eagles, there the eagles will gather, it's nonspecific answer, but it's entirely accurate. Where's this judgment going to take place? Well, wherever it's needed, wherever there's a body all around the world.

Commentator Darrell Bock says in effect, "Jesus is saying, do not worry about where the judgment will occur. For once it comes it will be too late and all will see it. And as such, the point is, its finality, when it becomes visible all will see the judgment's horrific finality." End quote.

That point seems clear enough from the cross references we've used, we've looked at, but we might be able to reinforce it a bit by looking back at the two examples that he used in verses 34 and 35. To see that the coming judgment is indeed universal. Jesus says, "I tell you," What does he say? "In that night," singular, one event happening at one time. Then verse 34, "Two in one bed," so sleeping, a nighttime activity, and then verse 35, "Two women grinding together," which seems to refer to a daytime activity. Commentators have puzzled over this a bit, this single event referred to as that night, but it's also an event that seems to span over the nighttime when people are sleeping, but also in the daytime when two women are working.

So one commentator, Ellis, came up with what I think is a pretty clever suggestion. He says that "Jesus is talking about the hour, right before sunrise, in which some are still asleep, and others have risen to prepare the day's bread." So it's a

solid guess. Some are sleeping, when some, I know some of you get up pretty early in the morning, to head off to work.

So two things could be going on at the same time, but he's assuming that this coming judgment happens in one place, in one time zone. What if it happens, though, as the Bible describes, in multiple time zones, as in, all around the world, and in some places, it would be during the night when people are sleeping, in other places is happening in broad daylight, when people are working?

Well, we know from the cross references that it will be exactly that. Coming son, or the Son of Man is a universal worldwide phenomenon. According to verse, Luke 21:27, according to Matthew 24:30, when all the tribes of the earth will mourn, when all will see the coming, the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, all the tribes of the earth, that means universal.

So since this is a universal worldwide judgment, it's going to happen at the same time in every place for everyone. People living in different time zones, are going to have different experiences of when this happens to them. Some are going to waken from sleep, to find their partner gone. Others are going to be working with a close companion, good friend and their co-

worker is going to be snatched away. They themselves will die in the judgment. Revelation 19:21, "They'll be slain with the sword that came from the mouth of him sitting on the horse."

So the coming judgment, unpredictable, unavoidable, individual. So fourthly, visible, it's fifthly universal, find the sixth characteristic from this text. The coming judgment is eternal. The coming judgment is eternal. In other words, there is no coming back from this, there is no second chance. When Christ returns, his judgment is final. It's permanent, and the consequences will last throughout eternity. No matter when an unbeliever dies, whether it's now during the church age, whether it's after the church age during the Great Tribulation, we know from Revelation, those chapters that one third of the Earth's population is going to die in devastating judgments during the Great Tribulation or whether this, whether they die at the Second Coming.

It is whenever it happens, whenever their death occurs after their physical death, unbelieving souls go directly to Hades. We've read about this in, already at the end of chapter 16, as Jesus described, a soul trapped in Hades in torment, like going to jail, awaiting his trial, awaiting his condemnation, awaiting his sentencing. He's trapped there in jail, in Hades.

That's where they await a general resurrection unto judgment, as Jesus said in John 5:28, "The hours coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who've done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." This was also what we see, by the way, in Revelation 20:11-14, the general resurrection of the unbelieving dead who are waiting in the jail of Hades before being summoned before the Great White Throne in Revelation 20 Verse 11, to be judged. And then it says in verse 13, "That each one of them" according, "judged according to what they had done."

They'll be justly condemned and then what is the sentencing? Sentencing is into the lake of fire. That's the second death, Revelation 20, verse 14, the lake of fire, eternal death, the ungodly will have heard those dreaded words from Christ himself, Matthew 25:41, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Verse 46, Jesus says, "These will go away into eternal punishment." Again, we repeat, "It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." So the coming judgment is unpredictable, unavoidable, and individual, it's visible, it's

universal, and it's eternal. What would our Lord want us to get from this text as believers? Turn ahead to Luke 21.

Just take a look at this in Luke's, just a couple of passages to read here as we're kind of wrapping up. But Luke 21, and this is Luke's record of the Olivet Discourse. Also, we said it's recorded in Matthew 24, and Mark 13. But in Luke 21:25, Jesus says, that "When the Son of Man comes, there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, and people fainting with fear and foreboding of what is coming on the world, where the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

And then verse 27, "They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." What does Jesus want to convey to his disciples? What does our Lord want us to get from this? Straighten up, lift up your head, your redemption draws nigh.

He wants us to be encouraged, to press on. He wants us to stand firm; he wants us to be excited. He wants us to look to the future with hope and joy, and great anticipation. There's nothing more that steals your resolve than knowing that your end

is certain and secure, that your investment is held by the Lord and it will pay eternal dividends of good to you.

Now turn back to the parallel, back in, this is Luke 21, parallel over in Matthew 24. Matthew 24:29-31 and while you're finding your way there, listen to what's immediately preceding Matthew 24:26. It connects to our text, Jesus issues the warning, "If they say to you, look, he's in the wilderness don't go out, if they say look, he's in the inner rooms, don't believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as to the west. So will be the coming of the Son of Man, wherever the corpse is there, the eagles will gather."

Now, when he returns, dead bodies everywhere, a supper for the eagles, they are swift to pounce on the meal. And then this in verse 29, Matthew 24:29, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of 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, they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He'll 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 this is not the rapture, the rapture has already happened, the rapture of the Church, this is for all those who are Christ's elect, have gone through the tribulation, and particularly from the nation of the Jews, but also any Gentiles who have repented and come to faith in Christ during the tribulation. They are going to be gathered together, all Christ's elect are going to be taken away at that time rescued from judgment; all unbelievers left behind.

This is literal, it's visible, universal judgment. Yes, metaphors in scripture. But these metaphors, these figures of speech, they refer to an actual salvation. They illustrate and accentuate an actual judgment, which is literal and visible, universal. Now, let's go to the end of the story. End of the Scripture, Revelation 19, Revelation 19 and see what John, what he saw, what Christ showed him about the Second Coming.

Revelation 19:17 says this, "Then I saw." There's that literary pattern again and again that John uses to move the narrative along from seeing one thing and then another thing and another thing. "Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, with a loud voice, he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, 'Come birds, gather for the great supper of God." Like get this, this is kind of gory, "To eat the flesh of kings, and

the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses," and their riders.

I mean, he's really got to rub it in here. I could, I get it, kings, captains, what mighty men, Now he wants you to understand, to eat their flesh. All right, so, so eat their flesh, "The flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."

Remember what I said earlier, some commentators being squeamish about the grim picture of judgment in Jesus saying where the birds of prey feed on the corpses there, Luke 17:37, this is worse, that's ma, that's mild compared to this. After slaying the Antichrist and the armies of the Earth, John writes in Revelation 19:21, "The rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse," that is the Son of Man. "And all the birds were gorged with their flesh."

There is enough dead there, there's enough for the eagles, and the vultures, and the Ravens and the Crows, and carrion birds of all shapes, kinds, varieties. Listen, my friend, if you're listening to me today, that doesn't have to be you. You don't have to be lying on that, on that field. It doesn't have to be your body being picked apart. You don't have to die like that.

You don't have to be cast away, thrown to the birds with your soul held in Hades until the resurrection that's going to bring you back to stand before, to be summoned before the Great White Throne. And then to be cast forever into the lake of fire shared with the devil and his angels. You don't have to let this happen to you. You can repent right now. You can heed Jesus' warning while there's still time because, behold, now is the appointed time. So repent now because today is the day of salvation. Don't walk away from here spurning what Jesus is saying, don't do that.

For those of you who have taken refuge, in the safety of the ark of faith in Jesus Christ, take heart. Luke 21:28, "When these things begin to take place, straighten up, raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near." That's for the people living at that time. For us, what are we looking forward to as a church?

The rapture of the church. We're going to pass over this whole time, only to return, when Son of Man comes and we'll see it from a different perspective, from a different angle, coming on the clouds with the Lord. And as he comes on the clouds, and he comes to the earth, we'll be behind him. We'll see this whole thing from a different perspective. So straighten up, raise your

heads up on high, put your shoulders back, your chin up. We got work to do.

We got to tell people about this message. Just return to the, if you're in Revelation, you should be, turn to the beginning of the 21st chapter, and see what awaits us, who believe. "Then I saw." This is after all this judgment has taken place, all this wrath has fallen, all the dead have come back to life, stood before the Great White Throne and he separated out the sheep from the goats. And the sheep, he pulls over to his right and he cares for them. And the goats, he condemns to eternal judgment, casts them into the lake of fire.

"And then I saw," chapter 21 verse 1, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Beautiful. "I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'

"And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' Also, he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My Son.'"

Sinner, be warned. Fear the Lord. Repent of your sin. Believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and embrace him as your savior and Lord. Flee to him, fly to him to find refuge before the eagle of God's judgment swoops down for you, and you are imprisoned for all of eternity. But you saints be greatly encouraged, for your salvation is nearer now than when you first believed.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we can't stop ourselves from praying to you and thanking you for revealing truth. For telling us the hard things. For in a sense, as it were looking us straight in the eye, and never backing down and telling us exactly what we need to hear. Some of this is very hard to hear as we think about loved ones who are lost and who, who refused to listen to the truth, and refuse to repent, and believe, and embrace the truth. But we don't want to be so caught up in that

sadness and sorrow that we lose sight of the fact that you have been so kind to us.

And that there are those around us who share the same love of, of you, the love of the, the same love of the father that you've given us. So, Lord Jesus, thank you for teaching us, thank you for exposing truth to us. Thank you for telling us about the end. Our Father, we long more than anything to being caught up in wonder, love, and praise of your son. We long more than anything to tell the truth as well, to tell people that we know and love, to warn them, to call them to repent and to put their faith in Jesus Christ, and really to walk and follow after us as we follow after him.

We pray for all those families, and friends, and coworkers, neighbors who are represented here, among the faithful, among the saints, those who do not yet know you, and don't have a saving relationship with you, who haven't been reconciled by the gospel. We pray, Father, that you would, through our witness, and through our boldness, and clarity in the truth, and love for them, that you would be pleased to rescue them from the coming wrath.

Please help us to live faithfully and to live encouraged days. Because we have every reason to be encouraged, every

reason to be strong, every reason to be hopeful, and optimistic about the future that is ours. We thank you, Father, for the goodness that you've shown us in Christ. We thank you, Lord Jesus, for teaching us. We thank you, Holy Spirit, for opening up the passage to us and helping us to understand, we ask that we will live faithfully as unto you according to the power of the Triune God that works so mightily within us. It's in Christ's name we pray, amen.