

17. Luke

*Luke 12; Be ready for the Lord's return (12:35-48)

- Christians should be alert and ready for Jesus' return. Most people will not expect the rapture. "Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks" (12:35-36). "But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect" (12:39-40).

*Luke 17; Jesus discusses the rapture and end times (17:20-37)

- When questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, Jesus replied, "For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst" (17:20-21). "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" (17:24). When the kingdom of God comes, everyone will know it.

- When the rapture occurs, it will be similar to Noah's flood and the destruction of Sodom. The righteous will be rescued before God's judgments begin. The vast majority of unbelievers will be unaware of God's approaching judgments. The biggest difference, compared to Noah's flood and Sodom's destruction is that following the rapture, most people will have a second chance to trust in Christ and be saved. "And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man... the flood came and destroyed them all... It was the same as happened in the days of Lot... it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (17:26-30). This passage implies that the Great Tribulation will follow quickly after the rapture because judgment followed immediately after the righteous were rescued. Notice that the phrase "destroyed them all" follows after Noah's flood and the destruction of Sodom. Just as there were no unbelieving survivors after these two events, there will be no unbelieving survivors after Jesus returns at the end of the Great Tribulation and judges the wicked (Matthew 25:31-46).

- The rapture is described in the following passage. "I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left" (17:34-36).

*Luke 21; Jesus discusses the last days, signs of the end of the age, great tribulation, second coming of Jesus (21:5-38; refer to similar passages; Matthew 24-25; Mark 13)

- Jesus was talking about the temple and said, "'As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.' They questioned Him, saying, 'Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And

what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?" (21:6-7). Notice that the question Jesus was asked is concerning the destruction of the temple. The question that the disciples asked Jesus in Matthew goes beyond just the temple. "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). This passage is not just talking about the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 A.D. It is also apparently describing the destruction of the end-time Tribulation temple and the "signs" leading up to its destruction. Many of the signs that Jesus mentions occur in the end times, such as "terrors and great signs from heaven", "great distress", "signs in sun and moon and stars" and the second coming of Jesus Christ (21:11, 23, 25, 27). Jesus' reply to the question indicates that the Tribulation temple will probably be torn down at Jesus' second coming and will coincide with the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem during the war of Armageddon (Daniel 9:2).

- "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled" (21:20-22). The beginning of this passage is similar to Matthew 24:15-16 except that people will flee to the mountains after seeing the "abomination of desolation", rather than fleeing after seeing "Jerusalem surrounded by armies". This connects an invasion of Jerusalem (and Israel) with the desecration of the temple at the Tribulation midpoint. The Jewish people "will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (21:24; Romans 11:25-26; Revelation 11:2). The Gentiles will take control of Jerusalem during the second half of the Tribulation. The "times of the Gentiles" will apparently end at the second coming of Christ, following the war of Armageddon. "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place" (21:32; refer to Matthew 24:34).

- Christians who are alert and on guard should not be surprised by the rapture (1 Thessalonians 5:4). "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man" (21:34-36).