

INTRODUCTION

In 1991 a new kind of how-to book appeared on bookstore shelves. Many bookstores refused to carry the book because they thought the title was insulting to their customers. But most of us are willing to admit we are dummies once we get outside our field of specialized training. Since 1991 the Dummies books have sold over 100 million copies in over 40 countries. Initially, dummy books were computer-oriented. After *DOS for Dummies* there was *Windows for Dummies* and *The Internet for Dummies*. These books are popular because they make complicated information easy to understand, even for us dummies.

Here are some actual Dummy books you may not know about:

Congress for Dummies. I wonder how many congressmen have read it?

Law for Dummies. If you go to an attorney, look to see if he has this book.

Potty Training for Dummies. I should have had my kids read that when they were little.

NASCAR for Dummies...and I didn't even know NASCAR fans could read!

Gambling for Dummies. All I have to say about that one is "it sure is!"

Luke 17 is one of the many prophetic passages in the Bible. Jesus spoke about His future return to earth. I decided we need a book called *Bible Prophecy for Dummies*. So, I'm going to try to take the confusing topic of Bible Prophecy and make it so easy to understand so even those of us who are dummies can comprehend it.

In all the Dummies books, the terms associated with the topic are clearly defined. So, before we get into the scripture, let's start by defining some basic terms in Bible Prophecy.

Apocalyptic Writings: Scripture that reveals truth that had been concealed

The word apocalypse means "to unveil," to "reveal." In verse 30 Jesus spoke about the day in which "the Son of Man will be revealed." That word "revealed" is the word *apocalupsis* from which we get apocalypse. The last book of the Bible is named Revelation, because the first word in Revelation 1 actually says, "The *apocalupsis* of Jesus Christ." There are apocalyptic passages in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, and Revelation.

Eschatology: The study of the last days

My first thought was to name this message "Eschatology for Dummies." But most people don't know what eschatology is. The Greek word for "end times" is *eschaton*. Thus, any study of the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world is called eschatology. So, tomorrow at school or work, if you want to impress your friends, just say, "Yesterday in church I heard a really eschatological message."

The Day of the Lord: All the events associated with the return of Christ

"The Day of the Lord" is not a 24 hour period; it is a term used throughout Bible Prophecy to describe multiple events taking place over a long period. When someone says, "We live in the

day of cell phones," they aren't talking about one single day, but a period of time. In Luke 17, Jesus used "day" and "days of the Lord" interchangeably. The Day of the Lord encompasses the rapture, the tribulation, and the return of Christ at the battle of Armageddon. In case you're confused about those events, here's a brief description about the events included in the Day of the Lord.

THIS IS GOD'S PROPHETIC AGENDA:

(1) *Rapture*: The moment in which Christians will be caught up to be with the Lord

The rapture is next big event on God's prophetic calendar. We read in I Thessalonians 4 when Christ returns the living Christians will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The Latin word for the Greek verb "caught up" is *raptio*, that's where we get the word rapture. People who do not know Jesus personally will be left behind when the rapture occurs.

(2) *The Great Tribulation*: Seven years of chaos and trauma in which a leader (Antichrist) will direct a worldwide government and economy

We know from both Daniel 9 and Revelation 6-18 this will be seven years of incredible disasters and difficulties as God pours out His judgement on sinful mankind. In the midst of all this chaos, a single world ruler will be in charge, the Bible calls him Antichrist.

(3) *The Battle of Armageddon*: When Christ will return to conquer Antichrist and his armies, afterwards He will enter Jerusalem to establish His earthly kingdom (millennium)

At the end of the seven year tribulation, Antichrist and his armies will gather to attack Israel. Revelation 19 predicts Jesus will return and easily conquer Antichrist and his armies. Then according to Zechariah 14, Jesus will enter Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate and set up His Kingdom on earth.

Now, with this introductory background, consider what Jesus said in Luke 17:20ff.

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'there it is,' because the kingdom of God is within (among) you." Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot’s wife!

Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. (Two men will be working in the field; one will be taken and the other left).”

“Where, Lord?” they asked. He replied, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.”

As I attempt to simplify this information, let’s notice five teaching points about the future. So, even if you aren’t a dummy, listen anyway, trust me, there *will* be a test.

1. GOD’S KINGDOM IS BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE

The Pharisees assumed the kingdom of God would be constituted by a military king. They expected the Messiah to come and reestablish the kingdom David and Solomon enjoyed a thousand years earlier. But in verse 21 Jesus said, “The Kingdom of God is within you.” The word translated “within” can also be translated “among.” There is a sense in which God’s Kingdom is established in the hearts of those who follow Christ, but I believe Jesus was telling them the Kingdom of God was “in their midst.” As He spoke those words to the Pharisees, they didn’t recognize the King was standing right in front of them!

Here’s a simple way to understand the Kingdom of God, for us Dummies. When you think “Kingdom of God” think of a King. The only thing you need to have a kingdom is a king. When you have crowned Jesus as King, and submitted to His rule over you, you are in the Kingdom. My life verse says: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33) Jesus didn’t say, “Seek the kingdom and ITS righteousness.” He said, “Seek the Kingdom and HIS righteousness.” The kingdom of God is all about King Jesus. Paul writes in Romans 14:17 that the kingdom of God is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

But the Kingdom of God has a dual meaning. In addition to being an invisible kingdom in your heart, the Bible also reveals the Kingdom of God has a future aspect. There will be a literal, visible kingdom of God in the future. Sometime in the future Jesus will literally rule over all the nations. When Gabriel told Mary Jesus would be born, He made several announcements about Jesus: He would be called Jesus; He would be great, and He would save His people from their sins—and Jesus has already done that. But Gabriel also predicted a time when “the government shall be upon his shoulders.” That hasn’t happened yet. Can you imagine the UN Security Council meeting to discuss Iraq? On television you see them getting on their knees and they say,

"Jesus, the government is on your shoulders, so tell us what to do about Iraq." Don't hold your breath! But one day, it WILL happen. All the governments of the world will look to Jesus as their leader.

Don't get too uptight about the future aspect of the Kingdom because our job is be good subjects in the present Kingdom. Some people only think about heaven, and how wonderful it will be, but they assume they have to be miserable now. Don't miss out on it! The Kingdom is here, it's now. The Christian life is NOT just about pie in the sky by and by—it's also about steak on your plate while you wait!

2. THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL ARRIVE LIKE LIGHTNING

Jesus wanted to make Bible prophecy simple. He used metaphors anyone can understand, such as lightning. He said His coming would be like lightning. I went on the internet and learned some interesting things about lightning that helped me understand the aspects of His return.

For instance, lightning strikes 100 times every second somewhere on earth. Jesus understood everything about lightning, since He's the Creator. So *how* is His return like lightning? First, lightning strikes when there is storm. When Jesus returns He will come into a stormy world of political and economic chaos. When there is a storm, you should be cautious about lightning, when you see a political and economic storm, watch out for His return!

Second, lightning occurs suddenly. It doesn't slowly weave its way down; it strikes as fast as... well, lightning. Lightning usually travels from cloud to ground and then flashes back upward at a speed of 1/10,000 of a second. When Jesus comes to rapture the church, He will stop in the clouds and then we'll be caught up to be meet Him in the clouds, as fast as lightning. I Corinthians 15 tells us when Jesus comes to rapture the church it will happen in a "twinkling of an eye." You won't have time to repent when He comes, so you'd better be right with God BEFORE He returns.

Third, lightning possesses awesome power. In the split-second lightning flashes the air in its channel is heated to 1,400° F. This rapid heating creates such a shock, there is an audible sonic wave we call thunder. The energy discharged in a single stroke of lightning is enough to lift a two ton weight (like your car) 62 miles straight upward. What power! When Jesus returns, He won't come as gentle Jesus meek and mild—He will come as the all-powerful King. He came the first time as the Lamb of God to bear the sin of the world. But when He comes again, He will be the mighty Lion of the Tribe of Judah!

Finally, you never know exactly when lightning will strike—it is always unexpected. People who have been struck by lightning, and survived, say they never *expected* it to happen. They were *shocked*, literally. Had they known it was going to happen, they would have taken precautions to avoid it. The return of Jesus is going to happen when people least expect it, they will literally be shocked. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2 Paul used another metaphor to describe how Jesus will return unexpectedly: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." Every time you read of a burglary, or you see lightning flashing across the sky, it should serve to remind you to be ready for the return of Jesus.

3. CONDITIONS WILL RESEMBLE THE DAYS OF NOAH AND LOT

The Bible says *nobody* knows the day or the hour of Jesus' return. If you hear someone who sets a definite date for the return of Jesus, you know *immediately* they're a false prophet. You can't know the exact date, but it's possible to discern the season, the general time.

Jesus predicted when world conditions match those during the time of Noah and Lot; we should start paying attention because God's Judgement will happen soon. Two important conditions existed during the days of Noah and Lot.

First, during the time of Noah and Lot, there was extreme immorality and wickedness. Genesis 6:5 says, "The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on earth had become, and that every inclination of the thought of his heart was only evil all the time." In Genesis 19 we read perverted sexual behavior was widespread in Sodom and Gomorrah. When the two angels (who looked like men) visited Lot's house to warn his family to leave, the homosexual men of the city wanted to rape them. In Genesis 19:5 we read, "They call to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.'" Lot went out and begged the men of the city not to do this "wicked thing." Then they got angry at Lot and shouted, "Who do you think you are? How dare you say what we do is evil! It's our right to act this way if we want. You are an intolerant religious fanatic!" When they tried to rape Lot, the angels had to supernaturally intervene and rescue him.

So the first condition was extreme wickedness. A second condition existed. While they were surrounded by immorality and wickedness, the people lived their lives as if nothing was wrong. They accepted that kind of behavior as normal. Instead of the public being alarmed or outraged at the wickedness, Jesus said they kept on eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage. Even if they didn't personally participate in the wickedness of their culture, they condoned it by acting as if nothing was wrong.

Does that sound like America today? We are living in a time when homosexual behavior is gaining national acceptance. If you even suggest it is perverted, you're labeled an intolerant hate-monger. We lead the world in exporting pornography. We continue to kill unborn babies by the millions. And as Gary Bauer said Thursday night, we don't do it reluctantly we have exalted abortion as if was a freedom right up there with the freedom of speech or the freedom of religion. And the whole time, most of us aren't alarmed or outraged. We just try to forget about it and so we keep on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

The New Testament confirms in the last days there will be a great rise in immorality. Paul writes: "Mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy...conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) To me, that's a scary description of our American culture. We've never seen more spirituality and religion, but it is a powerless, godless religion. Jesus said when we see conditions that match those of Noah and Lot, to be ready!

4. GOD ALWAYS DELIVERS HIS OWN FROM JUDGEMENT

Bible Prophecy is not only a message of doom and gloom—it's a story of deliverance. Yes, there was a flood, but God delivered Noah and his family. Yes, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and sulfur, but God delivered Lot and two of his daughters. And the same God who delivered them will deliver us from the time of great tribulation and judgement. That's precisely what Peter writes in 2 Peter 2:5-9: "God did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on it's ungodly people, but he protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; If he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what will happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (living among them day after day, he was tormented in his righteous soul by what he saw and heard)—if this is so, *then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials.*" (2 Peter 2:5-9)

Before the judgement of the Great Tribulation, Jesus is going to come and rapture His church out of this world. Even though we live in a wicked world, like Noah and Lot, God is still delivering His own. Paul writes, "Where SIN did abound, GRACE did more abound!" (Romans 5:20)

Before God destroyed the world with a flood, Noah preached righteousness for 120 years, but the people scoffed at this crazy old man building a boat in his backyard. Can't you hear the jokes the made about him down at the local bar? But when the flood came, they stopped laughing. I realize there are many people who think we are a bunch of fools for coming together to sing, pray, and study this old book. After all, we could be sleeping in, doing something productive like reading the Sunday comics or watching the NFL pre-pre-pre-game show. But trust me, when the rapture comes, they won't think we're fools.

5. MRS. LOT'S MISTAKE: DON'T LOVE THIS WORLD!

Luke 17:32, Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife!" As they were fleeing Sodom, Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. A Sunday School teacher told the story of Lot's wife her class, when one little boy said, "That's nothing, this week, my mommy looked back while she was driving and she turned into a telephone pole!"

In Genesis 19 we learn even after the angels warned them to leave, Lot and his family hesitated. So the angels forcefully put their hands on them and dragged them out of the city. God strictly warned them not to look back while the city was being destroyed. But as they climbed the mountain, Lot's wife either didn't believe God, or couldn't resist the temptation, so she disobeyed God and turned back to look, and POOF! She was ionized.

Why did Jesus warn us to remember her? I'm sure Mrs. Lot was basically a good person, the salt of the earth. Her mistake was she still loved Sodom so much she couldn't resist one last look. Sadly, our pews are filled with people who are religious on Sundays, but they are still fascinated and enamored with this world. 1 John 2:15-17 warns: "Do not love the world or anything in the world...For everything in the world, the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father...the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."

Before Lot moved into Sodom there is no record of him being married, so we assume he found a wife in Sodom and lived there long enough to have a family. Mrs. Lot married a righteous man and probably accepted his religion and prayed to the one God, but she never fully got over her love for Sodom. On the mountain that day, she was out of Sodom, but Sodom wasn't out of her. Mrs. Lot represents people who have a superficial interest in God and the Bible, but they never truly commit themselves to Him. Oh, they are close to people who know Jesus, and they hope to be saved by association. Sometimes teenagers or adults think they'll go to heaven because their parents are Christians, but God has no grandchildren, only children. A husband may think he'll go to heaven because his wife is such a dedicated disciple, but it won't happen.

Mrs. Lot is a sad reminder of how people will be separated at the rapture. Jesus said two people would be at work. When Jesus returns like lightning, BLINK, one will be taken and the other one is left. A husband a wife will be sleeping together. The wife loves Jesus and has prayed for her husband for years but he thinks religion is for women, children, and sissies. BLINK, suddenly she is gone—and he is left behind to endure the worst time in the history of the world. Don't make the mistake of Lot's wife! Don't love this old world, love God with all you heart, mind, soul, and strength!

CONCLUSION

In the last verse of Luke 17 Jesus answered a final question. In verse 37, His disciples asked Him, "WHERE will this all happen?" (Notice they didn't ask "when?") Jesus said, "Look for the buzzards." Commentators offer some esoteric interpretations of that statement; their problem is they just don't know much about buzzards. If you grew up in Texas or Alabama, chances are you know something about buzzards. As a child, I used to ride in the pickup with my dad, a forester for International Paper. Once when I was about six years old, I looked up and saw seven or eight big black birds flying in a tight circle. I asked my dad what was going on. He explained buzzards eat dead animals. When they find a dead or dying one, they fly around in circles before they have their meal. I thought that was pretty neat, and I became so fascinated about buzzards I decided I'd catch one and make it my pet. A few days later, I saw a buzzard flying above our house, so I ran inside and got a bottle of ketchup and splattered it all over my white t-shirt and went out in the back yard and lay down. My plan was when the buzzard landed to check me out, I'd jump up and catch him. I thought it was a pretty good plan until my mom looked out the kitchen window and saw me, she let out a scream and came running out to check on me. When she saw it was ketchup, I was the one who caught it!

Jesus was answering the question "Where?" Even those of us who are Dummies can figure out what He meant. He was indicating, "Just look where the vultures are circling, and that's where the action will take place." Let's step away from that and consider what we see on the news and read in the newspaper these days. The entire world is focused on the events of the Middle East, particularly on Israel. The Middle Eastern countries have declared their hatred of Israel. America has been targeted by the terrorists because we are one of the few friends of Israel. The vultures are gathering, so pay close attention to what happens in Israel.

The purpose of Bible Prophecy is not like some board game or video game where you are given a few clues so you can figure out the mystery. The point of Bible Prophecy is to warn you Jesus is going to return, and we don't know *when*, so you had better give your heart to Him, *now*! Do you know for certain if Jesus returned today you'd be taken to be with Him? Or do you know for certain you have eternal life and you'll go to heaven when you die? You don't have to be a dummy to realize those are the most important questions you'll ever answer.

If you don't have that assurance, I encourage you to take a few simple steps: First, admit you are a sinner. Admit you will never be good enough to earn access into heaven. Second, be willing to turn from your sins and place your trust in Jesus Christ to save you. Third, it's not enough to simply believe the facts about Jesus; you must be willing to receive Him in your life as Lord and Master. Will you do that today?

OUTLINE

TERMS:

Apocalyptic Writings: Scripture that reveals truth that had been concealed.

Eschatology: The study of the last days

The Day of the LORD: All the events associated with the return of Christ

GOD'S PROPHETIC AGENDA:

1. *Rapture*: The moment in which Christians will be caught up to be with the Lord.
2. *The Great Tribulation*: Seven years of chaos and trauma in which a leader (Antichrist) will direct a worldwide government and economy.
3. *The Battle of Armageddon*: When Christ will return to conquer Antichrist and his armies, afterwards He will enter Jerusalem to establish His earthly kingdom. (millennium)

1. GOD'S KINGDOM IS BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE

2. THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL ARRIVE LIKE LIGHTNING

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." *1 Thessalonians 5:2*

3. CONDITIONS WILL RESEMBLE THE DAYS OF NOAH AND LOT

"Mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy...conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power." *2 Timothy 3:1-5*

4. GOD ALWAYS DELIVERS HIS OWN FROM JUDGEMENT

5. MRS. LOT'S MISTAKE: DON'T LOVE THIS WORLD!

"Do not love the world or anything in the world...For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father...the world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." *1 John 2:15-17*



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes