

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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CONCERNING
THE DISCIPLES'
REDEMPTION
AND THE OVERCOMERS'
RAPTURE

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Living Stream Ministry

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In Luke 21:5—22:46 Jesus, the Man-Savior, speaks to His disciples to prepare them for His death. As part of this preparation, He tells them of things to come (21:5-36). In this booklet we shall consider what the Lord says concerning the disciples' redemption and the overcomers' rapture (vv. 28-36).

OUR REDEMPTION DRAWING NEAR

In 21:28 the Man-Savior says, “And when these things begin to happen, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” In this verse “redemption” surely refers to the redemption of our body, that is, the transfiguration of our body. Paul speaks of this redemption in Romans 8:23: “Even we ourselves groan in ourselves, eagerly expecting sonship, the redemption of our body.” In Philippians 3 he speaks of the transfiguration of our body: “The

Lord Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, conforming it to the body of His glory” ([vv. 20-21](#)). Therefore, the redemption in [Luke 21:28](#), the redemption that is drawing near, is not the redemption of our spirit or soul but the redemption of our body. We shall experience this redemption at the Lord’s coming back.

THE SIGN OF THE FIG TREE

In [Luke 21:29-31](#) the Lord tells the disciples a parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees; when they are already sprouting leaves, you see it and know of yourselves that the summer is already near. So also you, when you see these things taking place, know that the kingdom of God is near.” The fig tree, signifying the nation of Israel, was cursed in [Matthew 21:19](#). It passed through a long “winter,” from the first century to A.D. 1948, when the nation of Israel was restored. That was its branch becoming tender and putting forth its leaves.

This fig tree is a sign to the believers of the end of this age. The fig tree becoming tender ([Matt. 24:32](#)) signifies that life has come back. The sprouting of leaves in [Luke 21:30](#) signifies outward activities. Winter signifies the time of being dried up, the time of tribulation, whereas

summer signifies the age of the restored kingdom ([Luke 21:30-31](#)), which will begin at the Lord's second coming.

In [verse 30](#) the Lord speaks of summer being near, and in [verse 31](#), of the kingdom of God being near. However, in the Bible the word “near” does not mean that something will happen within a few days or even within several years. To the Lord an event that will take place in two thousand years may still be regarded as near, because with Him time and space do not mean anything.

When I heard about the re-formation of Israel in 1948, I was excited. I said to myself, “Look, the end of the age must be near. The nation of Israel has been under the control of the Gentiles since the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Now Israel has been re-formed as a nation.” I thought that probably in just a few years the Lord would come back. But thirty-nine years have gone by, and the “leaves” are still sprouting. Even though Jerusalem was returned to the Jews in 1967, we can still say only that the time is “near.”

In [Luke 21:32](#) and [33](#) the Lord goes on to say, “Truly I tell you that this generation shall by no means pass away until all things take place. The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My words shall by no means pass away.” The word

“generation” in verse 32 is not the generation according to age or people, as the generations in Matthew 1:17. Rather, this is the generation according to the moral condition of the people, as the generation in Luke 11:29-32 and Proverbs 30:11-14. “All things” in Luke 21:32 refer to the things predicted in the foregoing verses. The word “until” implies that some things have not yet taken place. Therefore, more time is needed for all things to take place.

A WARNING CONCERNING DISSIPATION, DRUNKENNESS, AND ANXIETY

In Luke 21:34-35 the Lord says, “And take heed to yourselves lest at some time your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and anxieties of life, and that day come upon you suddenly as a snare; for it will come in upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth.” The Greek word rendered “dissipation” indicates a drunken hangover. The phrase “dissipation and drunkenness” refers to indulgence in the enjoyment of eating and drinking.

The Lord’s word here is similar to that in Luke 17:27: “They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given

in marriage, until the day in which Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” The generation of Noah was characterized by the indulgence of the lustful self. Dissipation and drunkenness in [Luke 21:34](#) refer to the indulgence of the lustful self in the excess of the enjoyment of eating and drinking. The Lord’s word concerning dissipation, drunkenness, and anxieties of life may be considered the concluding word of His message about these things recorded in [chapters twelve, fourteen, and sixteen through eighteen](#).

Those who indulge their lust in eating and drinking and who are weighed down with the anxieties of life will become stupefied by their enjoyment and anxiety. Suddenly, unexpectedly, “that day” will come upon them as a snare, as a net cast over them. This snare will come upon all those dwelling on the face of all the earth.

As an elderly man, I can testify that the trend, or the tide, among mankind has changed a great deal over the years. Dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxiety of life have never been as prevailing as they are today. On the one hand, people are struggling for enjoyment; on the other hand, they are suffering from anxiety. Dissipation, drunkenness, and anxiety lead to different

kinds of disease. This country is very good, but consider how many people are struggling to indulge their lusts. Many are competing with others to have better cars and houses. But as they struggle for enjoyment, they suffer from the anxiety of life. As a result, that day will come upon them as a snare.

PREVAILING TO ESCAPE AND STAND BEFORE THE SON OF MAN

In Luke 21:36 the Lord says, “But be watchful, at every time beseeching, that you may prevail to escape all these things which are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” To prevail here is to have strength and ability. The strength and ability to escape the great tribulation come from watchfulness and beseeching.

The word “escape” in 21:36 signifies being taken, raptured, before the great tribulation (Matt. 24:21), which will be a severe trial upon the whole inhabited earth (Rev. 3:10; Luke 17:34-36). To be thus raptured is to be kept “out of the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth” (Rev. 3:10). Furthermore “all these things” are the things of the great tribulation. To stand before the Son of Man corresponds to the standing of

those in [Revelation 14:1](#). It indicates that the raptured overcomers will stand before the Savior on Mount Zion in the heavens before the great tribulation (see [Rev. 12:5-6, 14](#)).

BESEECHING TO BE KEPT OUT OF THE HOUR OF TRIAL

In [Luke 21:36](#) the Man-Savior charges us to be watchful. Instead of being stupefied or drugged, we need to be vigilant. Furthermore, at every time we need to beseech. This is not to pray in a general way; it is to pray in a particular way that we may prevail to escape the things that are about to take place. As we have pointed out, to prevail in this way is to have the strength and ability to escape the great tribulation. We should not be caught in the trend of today's world. Instead, we need to escape this trend. The strength and ability to escape come from being watchful and from beseeching. If we pray in a particular way, we shall prevail to escape all the things that are about to take place.

We have seen that to escape the things that are about to take place is to be raptured before the great tribulation. This is also to be kept out of the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole inhabited earth to try those who dwell

on the earth. Hence, the Lord's word in 21:36 is the fulfillment of the promise He gives to the church in Philadelphia: "Because you have kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you out of the hour of trial which is about to come on the whole inhabited earth, to try them who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10). "Trial" here undoubtedly denotes the great tribulation, as indicated by the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets with the seven bowls (Rev. 8:13—9:21; 11:14-15; 15:1; 16:1-2). This trial may also include the supernatural calamities of the sixth seal and the first four trumpets.

In Revelation 3:10 the Lord promises the recovered church, the church in Philadelphia, that He will keep her out of the hour of trial. He will keep her not only out of the trial, but also out of the hour of trial, because she has kept the word of the Lord's endurance. This promise of the Lord, like that in Luke 21:36, indicates that the saints who have kept the word of the Lord's endurance will be raptured before the great trial. This implies that those who have not kept the word of His endurance will be left in the trial.

THE RAPTURE OF THE OVERCOMERS

Before the great tribulation, the Savior will

probably still be on the throne. The Lord's *parousia* (presence) will begin from the throne. This *parousia* will continue with His coming to the air and will end with His coming to the earth. Within His *parousia*, there will be the rapture of the majority of the believers to the air ([1 Thes. 4:15-17](#)), the judgment seat of Christ ([2 Cor. 5:10](#)), and the marriage of the Lamb ([Rev. 19:7-9](#)). However, certain believers, such as the one hundred forty-four thousand firstfruit in [Revelation 14](#), will be raptured to the throne of God and stand with the Savior on the heavenly Mount Zion. This is what it means in [Luke 21:36](#) "to stand before the Son of Man." Therefore, to stand before the Son of Man is to be raptured to the throne in the heavens to stand before the Savior. After this rapture, the Savior will leave the throne with those who have been raptured to the heavens and descend to the air in order to take care of the other believers who will be raptured later.

There has been much debate among Bible teachers concerning the rapture of the saints and the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Some claim that the rapture will be before the tribulation, and others say that it will take place after the tribulation. According to the Scriptures, we believe not only in the general rapture of all the

saints but also in the rapture of the overcomers. Concerning this, I encourage you to study the messages we have given on [Matthew 24](#) and the book of Revelation.

We need to put together [verses 34, 35](#), and [36 of Luke 21](#). These verses help us to realize that the downward trend on earth today is very strong. Actually, this trend has become a tide that carries everything and everyone along with it. It is extremely difficult for us as believers in Christ to stand in the midst of this tide. In order to stand, we need to be watchful and pray daily in a particular way so that we may receive the strength that comes from the resurrection life within us to stand against the trend, the tide, of the world. If we are strengthened in this way, we shall not be caught by the trend of this age. Rather, we shall be full of Christ and shall be buoyant. As those filled with Christ as the divine air, we shall be raptured to stand before the Son of Man.

Although the word “rapture” is not found in [21:34-36](#), there is a strong indication of the rapture in [verse 36](#). This verse speaks negatively of escaping all the things that are about to take place and positively of standing before the Son of Man. Where will the Son of Man be at the time implied in [verse 36](#)? He will still be on the

throne in the heavens. How, then, can we stand before Him there? The only way for us to stand before the Son of Man on the throne is for us to be raptured, to be taken away to the heavens.

In the epistle to the church in Philadelphia, the Lord promises the overcomers that they will be kept from, taken out of, the hour of trial. He promises to keep them from the time of the great tribulation. This means that they will be raptured before the three and a half years of the great tribulation and will not remain on earth to meet Antichrist.

Whether or not we shall be raptured before the great tribulation and be taken away to meet Christ on the throne does not depend on Him. It depends on our watchfulness and on our praying in a particular way. Constantly we need to be watchful and beseeching that we may prevail to escape the great tribulation. We need to pray that we may have the strength and ability to escape the things that will take place on earth.

Lot's wife is an example of one who did not prevail to escape. In [Luke 17:32](#) the Lord says, "Remember Lot's wife." Lot's wife became a pillar of salt because she took a lingering, backward look at Sodom. This indicates that she loved the evil world that God was about to judge and

destroy. We should not be like Lot's wife. We should prevail to escape, prevail to be kept away from the great tribulation. As we have emphasized, this is to be raptured to stand before the Son of Man on the heavenly Mount Zion. Then He will begin His *parousia* with us. When He leaves the throne to come back to earth, we shall be with Him. How exciting that will be! No doubt, those who stand before the Son of Man on Mount Zion in the heavens will be beside themselves with joy in the Lord.

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