One Will Be Taken and the Other Left

James Smyda
Recorded on November 21, 2026

During Christ's ministry on earth, on several occasions He instructed His disciples about the events that would occur in the end time through the Day of the LORD and leading up to His return to earth to establish the millennium. And in a couple of the times when He was having these discussions, Christ makes a particular point through an illustration. What I mean is He describes several scenarios where there are two individuals in a common endeavor. For example, He mentions two will be working in the field, or two will be grinding at the mill, or two will be sleeping in bed. And each time He uses these illustrations, He follows up with the statement, "One will be taken and the other left."

Now, most often those particular references are attributed to the concept of physical protection during the events of the end time. For example, in Protestant circles, they typically attribute these verses to their concept of the rapture. Now, you're probably familiar with the fact in Church of God circles, that's not a doctrine that we feel that the Bible teaches. We don't believe in the rapture. But we do have a concept related to physical protection during the end time. We get that from Revelation 12, and we oftentimes refer to that as the “place of safety”. Now, in my history in the Church of God, oftentimes these references to “one being taken and one left" are oftentimes attached to that concept of the “place of safety” that we get from Revelation 12.

But what we're going to do today in the sermon is take a much closer look at the two conversations where Christ makes these references, and see, is that really what Christ was referring to? The point that He's making, is that related to physical protection during the events of the end time? Or is He making a much larger point about who makes it into the Kingdom of God? In other words, who will make it into the resurrection to eternal life, and who will go in the lake of fire?

So what we're going to do today is to take a closer look at this subject to see exactly what was Christ's point, and what did He mean by these references? So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

<u>One Will Be Taken and the Other Left</u>

These references are found in two chapters in the Bible. Turn over to Matthew 24. As we're going to find here, these references are in Matthew 24 and in Luke 17. But we're going to start here in Matthew 24. We'll start reading here in verse 36.

> **Matt 24:36** *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37) But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38) For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39) and did not know until the flood came and took them all*

away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 40) Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41) Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left." (NKJV)

Now, if you notice there in verse 40 and verse 41, the words "men" and "women", those are both in italics. They were inserted by the translators. They were not in the original manuscripts. And you'll see this when we read Luke 17. It's similar as well. They insert some words there that the translators thought was appropriate for the meaning, but they're not actually there in the original. Now, picking up in verse 42.

"42) Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. 43) But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 44) Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (NKJV)

Notice He's obviously making these references in the context of the end times. And He's referring specifically to His return as well.

Now, just to tell you how this is oftentimes typically looked at -- because we're going to challenge a lot of common assumptions associated with these verses in this sermon today. But typically, what we assume is that "taken" is the positive outcome and "left" is the negative outcome. Because we're going to see we typically assume that where they're "taken", well, they're "taken" somewhere where they're in safety and protected from physical harm. That's oftentimes the assumption here. Now, we're going to challenge a lot of these assumptions in this sermon.

Now turn over to Luke 17. We'll look at the other reference where these terms are used. We're going to see here the context is very similar. We're going to start in verse 26. Now, notice that this is going to start off just like we read in Matthew 24, where it's going to refer to the time of Noah, and talk about those that are on the ark and those that are drowned in the flood. Now, that's going to become very important later. But just take note of that in the context here. So, picking up in verse 26.

Luke 17:26 *"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27) They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28) Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29) but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30) Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31) "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32) Remember Lot's wife. 33) Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34) I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35) Two*

women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36) Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." (NKJV)

Now, as I pointed out when we read Matthew 24 before, I said notice that the words "men" and "women" were in italics. In other words, they're inserted by the translators. They were not in the original account. Well, you'll see the same thing here in these three examples. The translators inserted the words "men" and "women". It's just referring to two individuals in a common task or a common endeavor. Now we're going to look at verse 37 here.

"37) And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?"…" (NKJV)

Now, obviously, from the context here, when they're saying, "Where, Lord?" They're saying, "Where were they taken?" Because Christ is saying, "One's taken and one's left". Well, they're asking, "Where are they taken?" Well, we'll notice His answer.

"…So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together." (NKJV)

Now, we're going to see that is a very important clue for us in terms of how to interpret this. Because notice that phrase is attached to those that are "taken" because the Apostles are asking, "Where were they taken?" And this is how Christ answers. It's obviously a very symbolic answer. But if we unpack what this is referring to here, it's going to give us some very meaningful clues as to how to understand these statements here.

Now, there's a very similar statement that Christ made back in Matthew 24. So, let's turn back over to Matthew 24. Because we're going to see He almost, word for word, makes the exact same statement here in Matthew 24. But it's prior to when He mentions the one being "taken" and the one being "left". Let's start in Matthew 24 and verse 21.

Matt 24:21 *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22) And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."* (NKJV)

Now, this is a very obvious reference to the Day of the LORD. The most catastrophic events that have ever taken place in the history of mankind. That's obviously what He's referring to here. So, we're obviously addressing an end-time context. That is what we're talking about. Now, in verse 23.

23) "Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24) For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25) See, I have told you beforehand. 26) "Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27) For as the

> *lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28) For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."* (NKJV)

And notice that's almost word for word what we read there in Luke 17. There's really just a one-word difference here. Because in Luke 17, it used the word "body". In Matthew 24 here, it uses the word "carcass". Now, this gives us a little more clear idea of what this is getting at. Because think about the word "carcass". When you use the word "carcass", you could be referring to an animal. You might be referring to a human. But you're specifically referring to a dead animal or a dead human. No one refers to a living animal or a living human as a "carcass". And so that's going to be a very important clue here.

Now let's look at the Greek words here. Because you notice in both of these accounts, we read the word "eagles". In English, it was the same word, and it's also the same word in Greek. Now we're going to dig into some of the Greek words here to get a closer idea of exactly what we're talking about. Now, the Greek word here translated as "eagles" is transliterated into English as "aetos". It's Strong's # 105, and the meaning I'm going to give to you comes from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates.

Now, just to make things easier as we go through this sermon, there are numerous definitions of Greek words that we're going to dig into today. All of these definitions come from Zodhiates, just to make this simpler. But the way that Zodhiates defines aetos is:

> *"An eagle or vulture, a species of rapacious birds represented as preying on dead bodies where some species of vulture is probably intended…"*

So, see, what it's referring to here, it could be translated "eagle" or "vulture". But it's emphasizing that these are birds that prey upon dead bodies. *That's the meaning*. So, the picture we can clearly see here in Matthew 24:28, we're referring to vultures feeding on dead bodies. Now, that's a gruesome picture, isn't it? This isn't giving us a picture of the good guys who've been taken away to safety, and this is a positive, happy picture. No, this is a gruesome picture of vultures feeding on dead bodies is what we're talking about.

Now, as I mentioned, here in Matthew 24:28 it uses the word "carcass", and in Luke 17, we saw the word "body". Now, again, not only is the English different here, the Greek is different as well. Now, the Greek word here for the word "carcass" is transliterated into English as "ptoma". It's Strong's # 4430. And again, the definition I'm going to give you comes from Zodhaites. He defines it as:

> *"to fall. A dead body fallen to the ground, a corpse, carcass…. In the Class. Gr. it figuratively referred to anything fallen, as the ruins of a wall or building. In the NT, a body fallen, a dead body, corpse…"*

So, you can see “carcass” is the correct word here because we're talking about a dead body. We're talking about vultures that are feeding on a dead body -- a dead carcass. Again, I know that's a gruesome picture, but that's what this is saying.

Now let's look at the Greek word that's translated as “body” in the parallel account there in Luke 17. Because we're going to see that this is a word that can be used much more broadly and it can refer to a living body or a dead body. But keep in mind, it can refer to a dead body as well. Now I'm going to read to you just a portion of Zodhiates' definition for this word because it's a word that can be used in lots of contexts that can have a broad meaning. The word is “soma”. It's Strong's # 4983, and Zodhiates defines it as:

> *“Body, an organized whole made up of parts and members….Generally of any material body, as plants…; bodies celestial and terrestrial, the sun, moon, stars….Specifically of creatures, living or dead.”*

So, see this is a word that can be used in lots of contexts. It can refer to a human body. It can refer to a group. It can refer to a celestial body like the moon. It can be used in lots of contexts. Now, just to be totally transparent here, this is also the Greek word that is used when the Bible refers to the body of Christ or to the Church as a body. This is also the Greek word used there.

And see, oftentimes when people are looking at -- particularly the Luke 17 account -- because as I mentioned, we oftentimes refer to “taken” and “left” as referring to physical protection during the end time. And we oftentimes assume that “taken” is the positive outcome. When the Apostles ask where are they taken? Christ responds with this picture of eagles -- or vultures as it can also be translated -- being around a body. And people will say, "Well, that word “body” there can mean the body of Christ." And then they interpret it as, "Well, this is the Church taken to protection." But then they kind of struggle with, "Okay, how do we explain the eagles or vultures in this picture? And why are they there?"

Well, see, we also have to keep in mind that the word there for “body” can also refer to a dead body. And that would make it exactly equivalent to what we read here in Matthew 24. It's a picture of vultures feeding on a dead body. Now, keep in mind, that would totally change our picture of “taken” and “left”, wouldn't it? Because if where they're “taken” is where the vultures are going to feed on dead bodies, that doesn't sound like a picture of the good guys being taken to protection, does it?

Now, what I want you to see next is this picture, this imagery of vultures or birds feeding upon dead bodies or carcasses. This is common Biblical imagery. We're going to see numerous examples where this imagery is used, and it's associated with God's judgment upon mankind. But it's never in a positive context. It's never a picture of the good guys being protected from harm. No, it's always a picture of death and destruction. And God's judgment upon mankind is often associated with it. But again, it's not a warm, fuzzy, positive picture. It's a very negative picture of death and destruction.

And to see some examples of this, turn over to Revelation 19. We're going to see here an account that tells us directly this is during the Day of the LORD, basically describing when Christ is returning. So again, keep in mind, this is similar to what we read in Matthew 24 and Luke 17. The imagery of the birds over a body and very much in an end-time context. Well, here we're going to read an example using the same imagery in an end-time Day of the LORD context but notice there's nothing positive or warm and fuzzy of protection about it. So, let's notice here in Revelation 19 and start reading in verse 17.

> **Rev 19:17** *"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18) that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." 19) And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army."* (NKJV)

Now, if you read the verses that lead up to this section, that's Christ on the horse, who's returning to the earth. So, these are definitely the bad guys that are all coming together to fight Christ.

> *"20) Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21) And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh."* (NKJV)

Notice that this is the birds coming to feed upon their carcasses. But this is not a warm, fuzzy picture of the good guys being protected. This is death and destruction from God's judgment upon the bad guys who were misbehaving. And we're going to see this is a very consistent picture.

So now turn over to Ezekiel 39. We're going to read here the latter part of the Gog and Magog battle being described. Now, I've covered this in previous sermons that this is basically a battle that takes place during the time frame pictured by the Eighth Day. I mean, if you read Revelation 20, it tells us, after the millennium Satan is released again to go out to deceive the nations. And it tells us he stirs up the Gog and Magog battle. Ezekiel 38 and 39 give us a more detailed account of that particular battle.

These are basically armies that are rebellious to God who decide to come and attack Jerusalem and try to plunder it for its riches. And if you read through these chapters, well, then God intervenes and He supernaturally destroys these armies. But notice the imagery it uses for those that He's destroying here. It's again this picture of birds feasting upon their corpses. This is Ezekiel 39 and verse 17.

> **Ezek 39:17** *"And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, "Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: 'Assemble yourselves and come; Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you, A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, That you may eat flesh and drink blood. 18) You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, Drink the blood of the princes of the earth, Of rams and lambs, Of goats and bulls, All of them fatlings of Bashan. 19) You shall eat fat till you are full, And drink blood till you are drunk, At My sacrificial meal Which I am sacrificing for you. 20) You shall be filled at My table With horses and riders, With mighty men And with all the men of war," says the Lord GOD."* (NKJV)

So, you see, basically what He's saying is, these armies that were in rebellion against God who were coming down to attack Jerusalem and to plunder it, that God had to supernaturally intervene and destroy them. Well, He's basically giving us a picture here that they're going to wind up with the birds feasting on their corpses. Again, a gruesome negative picture. But it's not a picture of protection of the good guys. It's death and destruction of the bad guys is what the picture is.

And if you'll turn over to Deuteronomy 28, well see God uses this imagery in His warnings to Israel when He's laying out for them what we call the "blessings and cursings". You might be familiar with the fact that Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, they're basically kind of parallel chapters. We often refer to them as the "blessings and cursings chapters" because the first half of the chapter is God describing, "Here's all the wonderful blessings I'm going to pour out on the Israelites if they consistently obey and do what He tells them to do." Then the second half of the chapter is, "But if you just keep being a bonehead and consistently being rebellious and ignoring His commands, here's all the bad things that are going to happen to you." And notice when He's describing all these bad things, all the curses that can happen to them, He again uses this imagery of the birds feasting on their dead bodies. So, let's read here in Deuteronomy 28 and start in verse 25.

> **Deu 28:25** *"The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26) Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away."* (NKJV)

So, notice again, He's using the same imagery. As we're going to see here, there's multiple examples. And the reason I'm showing you multiple examples of this is I want you to see that this is a common theme throughout the Bible. And when Christ used this imagery, He was using imagery that those listening to Him would be very familiar with because this is used multiple times throughout the Bible. And again, it's always in reference to a very negative picture. And to see a couple more examples of this, turn over to Jeremiah 7. We'll see here in Jeremiah's prophecies to Judah he mentions this same imagery a couple of times here. And again, it's always in a negative context. We're going to pick up in verse 25.

> **Jer 7:25** *"Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have even sent to you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them. 26) Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers. 27) "Therefore you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not obey you. You shall also call to them, but they will not answer you. 28) "So you shall say to them, 'This is a nation that does not obey the voice of the LORD their God nor receive correction. Truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth. 29) Cut off your hair and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on the desolate heights; for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of His wrath.' 30) For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight," says the LORD. "They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. 31) And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. 32) "Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room. 33) The corpses of this people will be food for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. And no one will frighten them away."* (NKJV)

Notice it keeps repeatedly using this same imagery. And it's always a very negative, gruesome picture of the punishment of the wicked. And to see one more example of this, turn over to Jeremiah 19. Once again, this is a warning to Judah with this same imagery. It's Jeremiah 19 and verse 1.

> **Jer 19:1** *"Thus says the LORD: "Go and get a potter's earthen flask, and take some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests. 2) And go out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the Potsherd Gate; and proclaim there the words that I will tell you, 3) and say, "Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle. 4) "Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents 5) (they have also built the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings to Baal, which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind), 6) therefore behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that this place shall no more be called Tophet or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. 7) And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hands of those who seek their lives; their corpses I will give as meat for the birds of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth."* (NKJV)

So, you see, repeatedly, we just keep seeing this same imagery of birds feasting upon the dead bodies. And again, this is never a picture of protection. A happy, warm, fuzzy

picture of the good guys being protected. No, this is imagery of death and destruction that God brings upon the bad guys is what this is.

So now that we have this in a little more clarity, let's turn back over to right where we were in Matthew 24 and see how this completely fits the context here. It's in Matthew 24 and again, we'll pick up in verse 21.

> **Matt 24:21** *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22) And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."* (NKJV)

And again, as I mentioned before, this is a very obvious reference to the Day of the LORD. Now again, we won't take the time to go through all the details of all the plagues of the Day of the LORD in the book of Revelation. But if you've ever studied that before, it's just so horrific. It's hard to wrap your mind around of how horrible the events of the Day of the LORD will be. So, let's keep in mind this is the context of what He's talking about.

> *23) "Then if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. 24) For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25) See, I have told you beforehand. 26) "Therefore if they say to you, "Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. 27) For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28) For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles…"* (NKJV)

Or the "vultures" as it can be translated.

> *"…will be gathered together."* (NKJV)

Well, if you think about that in the context of the horrific events of the Day of the LORD, it totally fits. He's talking about the day of God's wrath. His judgment on a rebellious mankind and the horrific events that will happen. Well, this imagery of the birds feasting on the dead carcasses of the evil, that totally matches and fits with the context. But now let's also remember in Luke 17, it attached this imagery to the statements about one being "taken" and one being "left". Remember, that was the clue about where they were "taken".

So, let's turn back over to Luke 17, and read through this again with this in mind. Now, again, we're going to pick up again in verse 26. And as I mentioned before, take particular note of the fact that the context starts here first speaking about Noah and his family being protected on the ark and all those who aren't. And you'll understand in a minute why I'm pointing that out. That's going to become very important in helping to sort all of this out.

> **Luke 17:26** *"And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27) They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28) Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29) but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30) Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31) "In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32) Remember Lot's wife. 33) Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34) I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35) Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36) Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left." 37) And they answered and said to Him, "Where, Lord?"…"* (NKJV)

Now remember, the Apostles are asking, "Where are they taken? You're talking about these individuals "taken". Where are they taken?" Well, notice Christ's answer.

> *"…So He said to them, "Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."* (NKJV)

Now as we noted before, yes, this does use the word "body" rather than "carcass". But we also saw that the Greek there can also refer to a dead body. We saw that the meaning for the word "eagles" there, this can also be translated as "vulture". And the emphasis is a bird that feeds on dead bodies. This is the same imagery that we're seeing all throughout the Bible. And again, it's not the imagery of the good guys being protected from harm. No, this is the imagery of death and destruction for those who've been evil and are receiving God's negative judgment. That's what this is.

Well, see, that's going to flip this picture. And what I mean by that is we typically assume, well, "taken" is the good outcome and "left" is the bad outcome. No, if where they're "taken" is where the vultures are feeding on the dead bodies, that's not a positive outcome. That means "taken" is the bad outcome and "left" would be the good outcome.

Now, as I mentioned before, I said take note of the fact that the context here starts off with the comparison of Noah and his family in the ark and those that were drowned. Now, turn back over to Matthew 24, because now we're going to dig into some wording here and see that the ones that are "taken", that's the bad outcome. "Left" is the good outcome. So, let's pick up again now in verse 36 of Matthew 24.

> **Matt 24:36** *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. 37) But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."* (NKJV)

Now, pay particular attention to the wording of the next two verses.

> *“38) For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39) and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”* (NKJV)

Notice those that are “taken away”, that's not Noah and his family who were on the ark and who were safe. That's the people drowned by the flood. They're “taken away” by the floodwaters. See, “taken away” is the bad outcome. It's not the good outcome. And when we dig into the meaning of the words here, we're going to see that even clearer. But let's just continue reading.

> *“40) Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left.*
> *41) Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left.*
> *42) Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”* (NKJV)

Now, as I’m sure you’ve noticed, we've focused a lot in this sermon on the words “taken” and “left”. These two outcomes that are being contrasted here. Now, the words “taken” and “left” here -- as far as the Greek words -- not only the English but the Greek as well, is the same in both Matthew 24 and in Luke 17. So now let's dig into what these Greek words mean. And this is going to further clarify for us that “taken” is the bad outcome and “left” is the good outcome. Now the Greek word here for “taken” is “paralambano”. It's Strong's # 3880. And again, the definition I'm going to read to you comes from Zodhiates. He defines it as:

> *“To take near, with, or to oneself, to receive to oneself. To take to oneself, seize or take into one’s possession. In the NT used only of persons, to take unto or with oneself, as an associate or companion,…..In Matt. 24:40, 41; Luke 17:34, 35, paralambánō in the pass. form is used as the opposite of aphíēmi (863), to let be. In these verses, those who are taken are not to be misconstrued as those whom the Lord favors, as if they were the same saints spoken of in 1 Thess. 4:17 who will….meet the Lord in the clouds. The verb paralambánō in most cases indicates a demonstration in favor of the one taken, but not always. In Matt. 4:5, 8, it is used of Satan taking Jesus up to tempt Him. In John 19:16 it is used of taking Jesus to lead Him to the cross. The verb paralambánō is to be contrasted in Matt. 24:40, 41 to aírō (142), to take up and away. It is used to refer to those in the days of Noah who were taken away, not being favored but being punished, while Noah and his family were left intact. Therefore, in this passage in Matt. and the parallel passage in Luke, paralambánō must not be equated to the believers…. at the coming of the Lord for His saints. It refers rather to those who, as in the days of Noah, are taken to destruction.”*

So, you can see clearly when we put all this together, our common assumption that “taken” is the good outcome and “left” is the bad outcome, that's the reverse of what Christ actually said. “Taken” is the bad outcome, because again, in Luke 17 when the Apostles ask, "Where are they taken? Where did they go?" Christ uses the imagery we see all throughout the Bible of vultures that are feeding upon dead bodies. They're

“taken” to death and destruction. See, being “left”, that's the good outcome. So let me share with you the Greek word here for “left”, it's “aphiemi”. It's Strong's # 863 and again the definition I'm going to give you comes from Zodhiates. He defines it as:

> *“To send forth or away, let go from oneself….To dismiss, e.g., the multitudes…; of a wife, to put her away….To let go from one’s power, possession, to let go free, let escape….Metaphorically, to let go from obligation toward oneself, to remit, e.g., a debt, offense,…Of sins, to remit the penalty of sins, i.e., to pardon, forgive,…”*

So, notice that both of these words can be used in a positive context and they can also have a negative connotation. It just depends upon how they're used. But again, if we put all this in context, pay attention to the wording, and again, just lean to the example Christ gave, when they said, "Where are they taken, Lord?” And He says, "Where the vultures are going to feed on the dead bodies." Well, that's very negative imagery. Obviously, He's saying that's the bad outcome.

And again if we then put that together with again the example of Noah that He used there, and the floodwaters took away the bad guys. They got drowned and killed, and Noah and his family who were righteous and got preserved. They were on the ark. They weren't the ones “taken away”. They were the ones “left”. See, what we can see here is again, “taken” is the bad outcome. “Left” is the good outcome.

But now let's also examine what we're going to see is another false assumption. And that is the assumption that what He's referring to here is physical protection during the end time. Because as I mentioned, that's often times what's assumed. Again, if you look at Protestant commentaries, they're typically going to associate these verses with their doctrine of the rapture. Now again, that's not a Biblical doctrine. It's not something we teach in the Church of God. But we oftentimes will take these verses and associate them with physical protection because we attach that to our concept from Revelation 12. What we call the “place of safety” and we'll briefly look at that later in this sermon.

But now let's pay close attention to the context of what Christ is actually referring to here. So, stay here in Matthew 24 but now let's start in verse 29. And let's pay close attention to the wording here and we'll see what Christ is really talking about because He's not addressing physical protection. That's not the point He's trying to make.

> **Matt 24:29** *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30) Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31) And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”* (NKJV)

Now we're going to see here verse 31 is absolutely pivotal in understanding how to understand the point that's being made with “taken” and “left”. Because what verse 31 is referring to is the exact point in time where Christ is gathering the resurrected Firstfruits. This is referring to the resurrection to eternal life of the Firstfruits. This is basically the event described in 1 Thessalonians 4 where Paul says, "The dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are alive will be caught up in the air to meet Christ". That's what He's describing here.

Now notice if we pay close attention to the wording of the rest of the verses here, it's going to keep referring to the specific hour -- the day and the hour. It's going to keep talking about this is the hour. It's talking about is the event of the resurrection. That's the context here.

Now we're going to skip over verses 32 to 35, because that's a little bit of a tangent here. Because if you have a New King James translation like I do, you'll notice there's a subheading above verse 32. It says, “The Parable of the Fig Tree”. Christ inserts a parable here to kind of make a side point. But just pick up in verse 36 and we'll see the context is following exactly what He just mentioned in verse 31.

> **Matt 24:36** *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”* (NKJV)

Now notice what specific hour He is referring to. *The hour of the resurrection*. When the dead in Christ rise and those who are alive are raised up to meet Christ in the air. *That's the specific hour we're talking about*.

> *“37) But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38) For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39) and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”* (NKJV)

Now as I mentioned numerous times, just take note of the fact that those who were “taken away” that wasn't Noah and his family, that was everybody who got drowned in the flood.

> *“40) Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. 41) Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. 42) Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”* (NKJV)

Notice again we're referring back to a specific hour and what is it? It's the hour when the resurrection happens. Now look at verse 43.

> *“43) But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken*

into. 44) Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (NKJV)

Again, what hour are we talking about? The hour of the resurrection. See, that's the specific context that we're talking about regarding one "taken" and one "left". And yes, Christ is speaking in symbolic language here. But the distinction He's talking about is the distinction we see in Daniel 12. So, turn over to Daniel 12, and we'll see here -- as I noted before -- the specific hour that Christ was referring to is the hour of the resurrection.

It's what's recorded in 1 Thessalonians 4, when the dead in Christ rise and those who are alive -- who are still physically living at that point -- are turned to spirit and they all go up to meet Christ. And Christ takes them to heaven as we see in Revelation 14 to be presented before the Father. *That's the hour He's talking about*.

Let's notice here when Daniel refers to this resurrection, he refers to two outcomes. There's a good outcome and there's a bad outcome. This is starting in verse 1.

Dan 12:1 *"At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time…"* (NKJV)

That's an obvious reference to the Day of the LORD.

"…And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book." (NKJV)

Obvious reference to the Book of Life.

"2) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,…" (NKJV)

We're talking about a resurrection here.

"…Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt." (NKJV)

As I've explained in numerous sermons, it would be more accurate to say "abhorrence" because that's what the Hebrew word there means for "contempt" -- to everlasting abhorrence. In other words, these individuals are going in the lake of fire.

"3) Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever." (NKJV)

Notice there's two outcomes here. There's a good outcome. Those who receive eternal life. And there's a bad outcome. Those who receive everlasting abhorrence. They're going in the lake of fire. That's the distinction that Christ is getting at when He's referring to some that are "taken" and some that are "left".

Again, “left” is the good outcome. You want to be “left” not “taken” in that context. That's referring to who makes it into the Kingdom of God and who goes in the lake of fire. So, the point that Christ is making is about keeping your spiritual life in order to make sure you make it into the Kingdom of God. *He's not even talking about physical protection*.

Now with this in mind, let's turn back over to Luke 17. We'll see here this is referring to the same thing. Christ is making the same point here. Now we're going to have to spend a little time covering all of the context here because Christ does make one obvious reference to physical protection and physically saving your life. What we're going to see is right after, He makes that reference and before He goes into one being “taken” and one being “left”, He makes it very clear He's switching specifically to a spiritual focus. Let's pick up now in Luke 17 and verse 26.

> **Luke 17:26** *“And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27) They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28) Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29) but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. 30) Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31) “In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away. And likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. 32) Remember Lot’s wife.”* (NKJV)

Now verses 31 and 32 there are an obvious reference to physically running for your life. So, hold your finger here and turn over to Mark 13 and we'll see obviously what Christ is referring to here because He makes a very similar reference in Mark 13. We'll start reading in verse 14.

> **Mark 13:14** *“So when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not” (let the reader understand), “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 15) Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. 16) And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. 17) But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 18) And pray that your flight may not be in winter. 19) For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. 20) And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days.”* (NKJV)

So, you can see clearly in the references there in Luke 17 -- and be turning back over to Luke 17. You can see here in verses 31 and 32, Christ is obviously making a reference to physically running for your life.

But now let's pay attention to verse 33 because He makes it very clear here that He's transitioning specifically to a spiritual focus.

> **Luke 17:33** *"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it."* (NKJV)

Notice He's basically hammering the point here. You have to be willing to lose your physical life to obtain salvation. He's not talking about saving your skin here. He's emphasizing the point that you need to be willing to give up your physical comfort, give up your physical life if necessary to obtain the Kingdom of God.

And just to see this a little more clearly -- again, keep your finger here, we're coming right back -- but turn over to Mark 8. We'll see here where Christ again makes this same reference but makes it very, very clear the point that He's making here is about a spiritual focus. This is Mark 8 in verse 34.

> **Mark 8:34** *"When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 35) For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."* (NKJV)

Again, that's almost word for word what we just read in Luke 17. Continue in verse 36.

> *"36) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? 37) Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? 38) For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."* (NKJV)

Again, that's an obvious reference to Christ's return for the resurrection. The day and hour that we read about in Matthew 24 is what He's referring to there. So, again, notice that the focus is solely on your spiritual life, not on protecting your physical comfort or saving your physical skin. It's you have to be willing to give those things up to be able to attain the Kingdom of God.

So now let's turn back over to Luke 17. Notice that in verse 33 here we switch solely to a very spiritual focus. Now pick up in verse 34.

> **Luke 17:34** *"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. 35) Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. 36) Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."* (NKJV)

Again, let's notice verse 37 here, because again the Apostles asked where are they taken? And notice His answer.

> *“37) And they answered and said to Him, “Where, Lord?” So He said to them, “Wherever the body is, there the eagles…”* (NKJV)

Or “vultures” as it could easily be translated.

> *“... will be gathered together.”* (NKJV)

See, the point that Christ is making here regarding those that are “taken” and those that are “left” really has nothing to do with physical protection. It's not about who's protected from persecution in the end time and who's not. This is a warning about keeping your spiritual house in order so that you wind up in the Kingdom of God and not in the lake of fire.

So, as you can see, our common assumptions associated with these verses -- unfortunately we've gotten it completely wrong. We completely inverted it and assumed that “taken” was the good outcome. No, that's the bad outcome. “Left” is the good outcome. And He's not even talking about physical protection. He's making a spiritual point. It's a spiritual warning about keeping your spiritual house in order so that when Christ returns, you'll make it into the Kingdom of God. And you'll be in the resurrection to eternal life.

Now as I've emphasized throughout this sermon, these references of “taken” and “left” really have nothing to do with physical protection. And as I pointed out previously, in Protestant circles they'll typically attach this with their doctrine of the rapture. Again, that's not a Church of God teaching at all. But we do have a teaching that's connected with physical protection in the end time. It's a concept we often refer to as the “place of safety”. Now this is a concept we pull from Revelation 12.

So, let's just turn over to Revelation 12 and briefly look at this. Let's also make sure that even though this is obviously a valid Biblical concept, let's make sure that we're not misapplying this as well. And the reason I mention that is I know growing up in the Church of God myself, very often times I have heard that this concept taught from what I would call a prosperity gospel type of viewpoint.

You are probably familiar with the term “prosperity gospel”. It's normally people that try to preach the idea that as long as you faithfully obey God and do what He commands, well, you'll just always be blessed with just wonderful positive things and God is just going to protect you from all pain and you won't have to suffer as long as you faithfully obey. It's only when you disobey that bad things will happen. *Well, that's just not how New Covenant Christianity works*. But let's look here again at the verses that do refer to what we often times call the “place of safety”. Let's read through here in Revelation 12. We'll start in verse 7.

> **Rev 12:7** *“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8) but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9) So the great dragon was*

cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11) And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12) Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." (NKJV)

Now obviously we're referring to an end time time frame here because we know that the short time it's referring to here -- he only has a short time -- well, what happens at Christ's return when He comes down to set up the millennium? One of the fulfillments of the Day of Atonement is Satan is bound for a thousand years and unable to affect mankind. That's what it's referring to here. So, there's a short time from when this takes place to when Satan is going to be bound for a thousand years.

"13) Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child." (NKJV)

Now we won't take the time to read the first six verses of this chapter. But if you read through those, you'll see that the "Child" being referred to is a very obvious reference to Jesus Christ. Again, if you read those first few verses of this chapter, that's very obvious. As we keep reading here, we'll see that the "woman" is a symbolic representation of the Church of God. Pick up now in verse 14.

"14) But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." (NKJV)

In other words, it's symbolically representing some portion of the Church going to a place where Satan -- and him using the beast power to try to kill these individuals -- they'll be protected from this persecution. Now pick up in verse 15.

"15) So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood." (NKJV)

In other words, Satan is using the beast power to pursue them.

"16) But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17) And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (NKJV)

Okay, who keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Christ? That would be the Church, right? But let's keep in mind that those that aren't included in the protection that's being described here, they're not pictured in a negative way. It doesn't say he's now going to go pursue and persecute those evil Laodiceans who were derelicts and not obeying God. *That's not what it says*. It says those who are keeping the commandments of God and have the testimony of Christ. So, in other words, there are some individuals God chooses to protect, and there are others He chooses to allow to face this persecution. And that doesn't necessarily mean that they're automatically rebellious, disobedient Christians.

You see it's comforting for us to look at this from the standpoint of, "Well, if the good guys get protected and it's just the rebellious, bad guys who get persecuted, well, that means if I faithfully obey, then I can avoid all the pain." Well, that's a very reassuring idea, but we have to keep in mind that's not what the Bible teaches. Because the Bible directly tells us that with New Covenant Christianity part of the package is facing persecution. And it's enduring through that persecution -- it's he who endures to the end who is saved. And we just have to keep that in mind. And to notice just a couple of verses that touch on this. Turn over to 2 Timothy 3 and verse 12.

> **2 Tim 3:12** *"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* (NKJV)

Now again some face worse persecution than others. But notice there's nothing about this that says, "Well, it's just the evil, rebellious ones that will suffer persecution". No, it's saying the ones that want to faithfully follow Christ, they're going to face persecution. And it doesn't give any exception. It says that that's part of the package. See, that's why we're told in Acts 14 -- if you 'll turn over there -- that it's only successfully enduring through persecution that we make it in the Kingdom of God. Because it's just part of the contract. It's part of the package. So, notice here in Acts 14 in verse 21.

> **Acts 14:21** *"And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."* (NKJV)

In other words, that's part of the package. Because what I'm getting at in this is, yes, there is a group that Revelation 12 certainly seems to tell us that God is going to choose to protect from some level of persecution during end time events. He's going to supernaturally protect them from the beast power being able to kill them. And there's other Christians that are going to face martyrdom. Again, that doesn't necessarily mean it's just the good guys that get protected and the bad guys that die. No, God for His purposes -- for whatever reason He chooses -- puts us through various hard trials and that may mean giving our lives. As Christ directly says, "If you seek to save your physical life, you could lose your spiritual life. If you're willing to give up your physical life for the Kingdom of God, then you'll make it into the resurrection to eternal life."

So again, I want to make it clear, I'm not dismissing the idea of the place of safety or that there is some promise of physical protection during the end time. But there's no guarantee that we're included in that group. We just have to have faith in God that He's not going to make us go through anything that He can't sustain us through. That He can deliver us through whatever we have to face.

So, brethren, what I want you to see in this sermon is first of all just to realize that our common misconception of Christ's comments there in Matthew 24 and Luke 17, we normally assume that “taken” is the good outcome. It's the bad outcome. Being “left” is the good outcome. But realize what Christ is getting at, He's not even talking about physical protection in the end time. He's giving us a warning to keep our spiritual house in order so that we will be spiritually in the right place with Him at the time of His return so that we make it into the resurrection and into the Kingdom God.

So, as we go forward from this Sabbath, let's heed Christ's warning. And realize as He tells us, we have to be willing to give our physical lives to obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God. So, let's make sure that we are the ones heeding this warning and keeping our spiritual house in order and make sure that we're the ones who are “left” and not the ones who are “taken”.