

The final passage is framed by another question from Jesus' disciples: "Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather" (Luke 17: 37).

Jesus does not answer the disciples directly with a location, but tells a mini-parable of the vultures. Eagles are more glorious than vultures. Eagles may also refer to vultures. Eight species of eagles and four species of vultures appear in Palestine, most probably described by the same Hebrew word *neser* or Greek word *aetos*. In the Near East, eagles and vultures both ate carrion (dead carcass) and hunted prey and were unclean (Levit. 11: 13; Deut. 14: 12). In this parable Jesus is referring to the common pattern of vultures circling high above a carcass. These birds are huge and are majestic in their effortless soaring flight. First, one vulture will spot a dead or dying animal. Soon, from far off, others will see the lone vulture circling and join it in its vigil. When the animal is dead, the vultures descend for a meal.

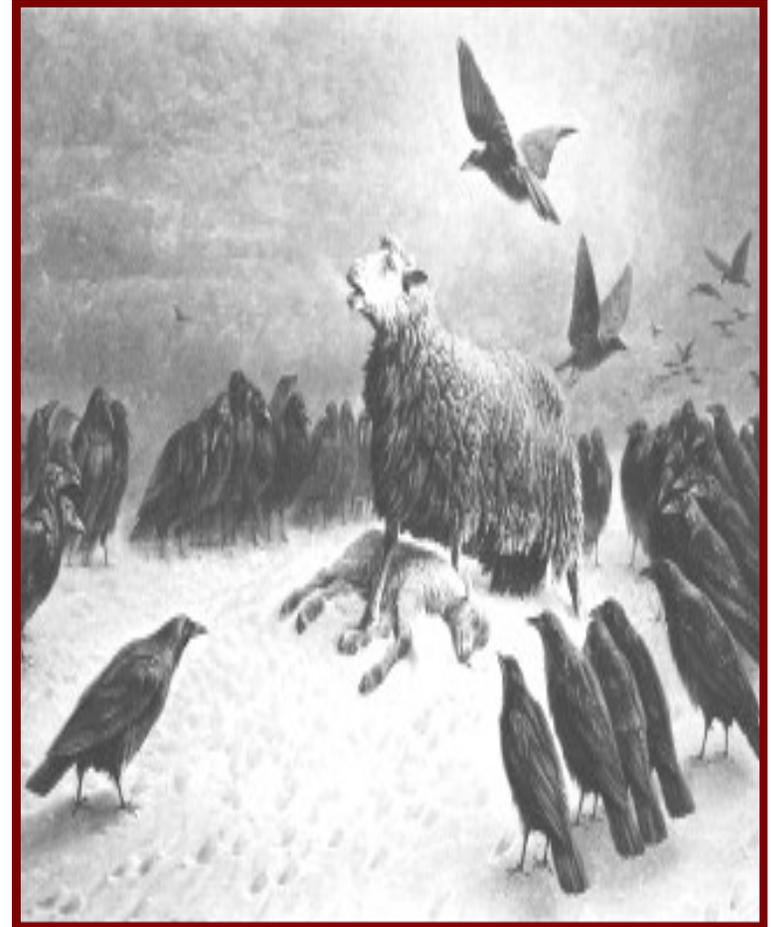
In Jesus' parable He is referring to the gathering and circling of vultures where a carcass is found, marking its location and making it obvious from miles around. The point is that high circling of the vultures makes the location obvious from afar. In Matthew's parallel this verse is immediately preceded by a verse on the visibility of lightening from the west to the east at the coming of the Son of Man. It may be that in this parable of the vultures, that Jesus is saying, that there is no need to pinpoint a location now; when Jesus comes it will be obvious to all.

\*(excerpted from: [www.jesuswalk.com](http://www.jesuswalk.com); [www.rc.net](http://www.rc.net))



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## ***The Parable of the Vultures and the Carcass***



***When Jesus comes it will be too late  
to do anything or get anything.  
Material possessions have no meaning at that time,  
and those for whom they do have meaning  
are destined for judgment.***

## **THE PARABLE OF THE VULTURES AND THE CARCASS**

A parable is a short, fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle. Parables are never meant to be taken for the letter of their word. When taken literally, at face value, the entirety of its meaning is lost.

\*And they said to him in Luke 17: 37, "Where, Lord?" He said to them, "Where the body is, there the eagles (also translated vultures) will be gathered together."

What can nature teach us about the judgments of God? Jesus quoted a familiar proverb to his audience: Where the body is, there the eagles (or vultures) will be gathered together. Eagles, like vultures, are attracted to carrion. The Book of Job describes the eagle spying out its prey from afar (Job 39: 29). The point of this analogy is that something will happen when the necessary conditions are fulfilled. The return of the Lord is certain, but the time is unknown. The Lord's judgment comes swiftly and often unexpectedly. Jesus is warning His listeners to not be caught off guard when that day arrives (Lk. 17: 26-37). It will surely come in God's good time! Those whose hope is firmly anchored in heaven will not be disappointed when God's judgment comes. They rejoice even now that they will see the Lord in His glory!

Jesus relates two incidents well-known to His hearers: the great flood in Noah's time (Gen. 6-7) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19). These two events have two elements in common: 1. People are going about their normal lives as if nothing is going to happen; and 2. On a particular day, destruction from God occurs suddenly and without further warning (Luke 17: 26-30).

Now Jesus warns His disciples that when this Day suddenly appears they are not to rush off or turn away to get something. Those who are concerned about material things will be destroyed. Only those who look forward to the Lord's coming will be saved.

What is the point about Lot's wife. What happened to her? She

paused and turned, transfixed by the destruction raining upon the city of her birth. How long she paused we do not know. Lot and his daughters kept hurrying on, but Lot's wife paused and looked, disobeying the angel's clear command. It was probably something like what happened in Pompeii in AD. 79. First, a volcanic gas settled over the city, asphyxiating many while they slept. Then the city was covered with heavy deposits of volcanic ash and the chemical action of the ash hardened the bodies of the dead, causing the surrounding ash to retain a perfect cast of their bodies. Perhaps her body became caked with the chemical salts raining down from the cataclysm. We are not sure (Luke 17: 31-33).

Next comes an awesome and cryptic passage: One will be taken, the other left. Day shifts to nighttime. There will be division, even of individuals who are in close proximity -- two people in a bed, two women grinding grain together with a hand mill, no doubt chatting. Without warning one is taken and the other left. The word "taken" is Greek *paralambano*, which means "to take into close association, 'take (to oneself), take with/along,'" usually in a positive sense. The word "left," Greek *aphiemi*, on the other hand, means "leave, depart from...abandon."

Taken where? The context of Luke is pretty vague. We get a hint in a parallel Gospel of Matthew 24. Here we get a hint of what Jesus might have meant. In Matthew, Jesus has just talked about Noah entering the ark. While neither Matthew or Luke refer to this "taking" as the Rapture, it does seem to fit with what we are told elsewhere about the Rapture or great gathering of God's people (Mt. 24: 31; Mark 13: 27; I Cor. 15: 51-52; I Thess. 4: 17; II Thess. 2: 1).

Though we cannot be sure that Jesus is speaking of the Rapture in Luke 17: 34-35, it seems that one group are taken away to be saved, and others are left to experience terrible destruction and punishment. There will not be time to get right with God. This separation will take place instantly, without warning. We must be ready for the coming of Jesus.