

Those Troublesome Eagles

by Pastor F.M. Riley



*"For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together,"
Matthew 24:28.*

*"And they answered and said unto Him, Where Lord? And He said unto
them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered
together," Luke 17:37.*

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Introduction

Oh, how troublesome these “*eagles*” have been! Those who claim to believe God’s Word have been discussing, theorizing, arguing, and debating about these “*eagles*” for many years. The “commentators,” supposedly “scholars,” and therefore “experts” on Biblical interpretation [*Sic!*], are often just as troubled by these “*eagles*” as anyone else. One commentary sets forth their “interpretation,” and another commentary gives a different “interpretation.” What are people to believe?

Is there a way to resolve this matter? Indeed there is! If people would stop interpreting, theorizing, and arguing about these “*eagles*,” and spend their time seriously studying these passages *in context*, they would find the answers they are looking for, and these “*eagles*” would cease to trouble them. **2 Timothy 2:15** and **John 16:13** are still in the Bible, and the Lord still honors His Word.

Now let’s just do some serious Bible study, beginning with.....

The Olivet Discourse

The Olivet Discourse is recorded in **Matthew 24-25**, **Mark 13**, and **Luke 21**. All three accounts are a record of the same discourse, given to the same four Jews, on the same occasion. The accounts vary in content and wording only because the Lord wanted to set forth different aspects of truth in each of the three accounts. These three accounts record the Lord’s discourse about His Second Coming back to this earth.

Most people have never seriously studied the Olivet Discourse. Even most Bible believers read it a time or two, then go to some “commentary” to find out what is being taught in the discourse. Or.....they go to their pastor, who, usually hasn’t seriously studied it either, to get an explanation of it. An exercise in futility!

Folks, nothing better has ever been found than seriously studying the Word for yourself, while earnestly praying for God’s guidance and enlightenment. Try it!

The theory held and taught by most people today is that the Olivet Discourse deals only with the Tribulation period, and has nothing to say about the rapture of God’s people. Therefore, in both passages dealing with the “*eagles*,” most expositors change the “*eagles*” into buzzards [*or vultures*] called to feast on the “*carcasses*” of the wicked which are slain during the Tribulation. This theory is commonly taught by many so-called “scholars” today, and is even set forth in various “commentaries.” I have never

been able to find Scriptural authority for changing an “*eagle*” into a buzzard. But some folks don’t bother with such “minor things” as Scriptural authority.

Don’t believe this theory. It isn’t so! Someone once said, “*A half truth is a whole lie.*” Amen!

I have intensely studied the Olivet Discourse throughout the 55 years of my ministry, earnestly praying for the Lord’s guidance, ***John 16:13***. I have checked, rechecked, and double checked my findings by “***comparing spiritual things with spiritual***” exactly as God’s people [*true believers*] are told to do in God’s Word, ***1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:21***.

Therefore I can tell my readers without apology, that the Olivet Discourse records the chronological order of events beginning shortly after the ascension of Christ back to the Heavenly Father, and proceeds forward into and through the Tribulation, ending with the Lord’s return to earth and judgment of the surviving Gentiles at the end of the Tribulation and beginning of His Millennial Kingdom. Carefully study and compare ***Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21*** with the history of this present dispensation, and with Bible prophecy, and you can see this truth for yourself.

My study, “*The Olivet Discourse in Context*,” sets forth a brief overview of the Lord’s discourse in the chronological order in which it was given. Please understand that this study is not an exposition, but I believe it would be helpful to those who want to seriously study the discourse.

I also want to assure our readers that the Olivet Discourse does include the rapture of God’s people, whether some want to believe it or not. This truth is made clear in my two studies, “*The Parousia*,” and “*The Parousia Revisited*.”

All three of the above mentioned studies will gladly be sent to any reader requesting them.

Now let’s turn our attention to the “*eagles*” mentioned in...

Matthew 24:28

To properly understand the statement made in this verse, the context should be carefully studied.

In verses **15** through **20** the Lord spoke about the Jews fleeing after seeing “***the abomination of desolation***.” According to ***Revelation 12:6*** and ***12:14***, and numerous related Old Testament passages, the Jewish people will flee to Petra, where they will be protected during the last half of the Tribulation. In verses **23** through **26** the Lord warns the Jews about “***false Christs***,” “***false prophets***,” and other deceivers who will try to convince the Jews to leave Petra, their “***prepared place***” [*Revelation 12:6*] of safety. These deceivers will claim that the promised Messiah has

come and is in such and such a place, verse **23**, or *"in the desert,"* or *"in the secret chambers,"* verse **26**. The Lord explicitly tells the Jews, *"believe it not,"* and *"go not forth,"* verses **23** and **26**.

Why not? Why shouldn't they at least send out a committee [Sic!] to investigate the claims brought to them?

Because, as the Lord explains, His coming back to Israel at the end of the Tribulation will be highly visible to everyone, *"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be,"* verse **27**. In other words, both Jews and Gentiles will be well aware of the Lord's return at the end of the Tribulation, for everyone on earth at that time will see the Lord *"coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,"* verse **30**. Compare *Revelation 1:7*.

The "eagles"

When the Lord comes at the end of the Tribulation, He is coming to *"judge and make war," Revelation 19:11*. The Lord will utterly defeat and destroy His enemies as He returns to Israel. See *Revelation 19:11-21, Isaiah 34:1-8, 63:1-6, Ezekiel 39:3-21, Daniel 2:34-35, 2:44-45, 7:13-14, 7:27, Zechariah 14:3-5, 14:12-15*, and many other similar passages in the prophetic Scriptures. In *Jeremiah 25:33* it is explicitly stated, *"And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground."*

It is then in view of this slaughter of the incorrigible wicked, that the Lord, just after describing His glorious coming in *Matthew 24:27*, then said, *"For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together,"* verse **28**.

The Greek word translated as *"carcass"* in this verse is the word, *"ptoma."* This word literally means, *"a ruin; that which is fallen; the fallen body of one dead or slain; a corpse; a carcass."* See Thayer's Greek Lexicon, page 557, Strong's No. 4430. The Lord is then saying that wherever these dead bodies of His enemies are at, there the *"eagles"* will gather to feast on the bodies and clean up the mess.

Folks, just as the lion has been regarded as "the king of beasts" throughout human history, so the eagle is regarded as "the king of birds." In other words, the eagle occupies the top position among *"the fowls of the air."* This truth is set forth again and again in the Scriptures. Look up the word "eagle" in your concordance and study the references given. Take special note of *Job 30:27-30*. Verse **30** explicitly states, *"Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she."*

The *"eagles"* in *Matthew 24:28* are representative of *"all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven," Revelation 19:17-18*, who are called by the Lord to come and feast on the dead bodies of those of His enemies following His return to Israel at the

end of the Tribulation. See *Ezekiel 39:4* and *39:17-20*. Following the slaughter of the Lord's enemies when He returns, thousands of carnivorous birds will descend upon the land of Israel [and other lands] to feast upon and clean up the dead bodies of the slain, and I suspect they will be led by the "eagles" the Lord mentioned in *Matthew 24:28*. Glory! The truth of God's Word will always prevail. Let the wicked be warned, and let God's people [*true believers*] rejoice. Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

Now you know the meaning of the "eagles" in *Matthew 24:28*. That passage shouldn't trouble you anymore.

But what about the "eagles" in.....

Luke 17:37.....??

The careful Bible student should immediately be able to see that the Lord's discourse in *Luke 17:20-37* is very different than the Olivet Discourse. I will point out and emphasize these differences as we study this text.

Luke 17 is not a part of the Olivet Discourse. To emphasize this truth, just as the rapture of God's people will occur before the Tribulation, so this discourse was given by the Lord before He gave the Olivet Discourse.

The occasion for this discourse was a demand by the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, for the Lord to tell them "*when the kingdom of God should come,*" verse **20**. The Pharisees apparently had in mind the kingdom prophesied in *Daniel 2:44*. But the Lord pointed out to them that "*the kingdom of God*" [*spiritual*] was already in their midst, verse **21**. Because the Pharisees were spiritually blind, they couldn't see it, *John 3:3*.

The Lord then turned to His own disciples, verse **22**, and began speaking to them about His absence from them. The Lord's absence from Israel relates to this present dispensation of grace which precedes the Tribulation and the Lord's return to Israel. The Lord warned His disciples not to be deceived by people who would come making false claims. The Lord's admonition to His disciples was "*go not after them, nor follow them,*" verse **23**. Compare *2 Peter 2:1-3*. The Lord didn't want New Testament believers deceived, even as He didn't want the Jews deceived. And just as He told the Jews in *Matthew 24:27* about His coming back to Israel, so in this next verse He tells New Testament believers about His coming in the air to rapture His people to glory, "*For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day,*" verse **24**.

Notice that the wording of verse **24** is considerably different than the similar passage in *Matthew 24:27*. Even the placement of the verse in the context is different. *Matthew 24:37* is placed just after the Lord's warning to the Jews not to leave Petra. But *Luke 17:24* is placed just before the Lord speaks about "*the days of Noah*" and

"the days of Lot," verses **26-30**. Why is **Luke 17:24** placed differently? Think about it!

The Lord then pointed out to His disciples that before He comes *"as the lightning," "first must He suffer many things; and be rejected of this generation,"* verse **25**.

Christ then went on to explain to the disciples the world conditions that would prevail on the earth just preceding His coming *"as the lightning,"* verses **26 – 33**.

The Days of Noah

First, there would be a repetition of *"the days of Noah."* The repetition of the *"days of Noah"* [verses 26-27] is one of the things God's people were to *"watch"* for [Mark 13:33-37]. Such a repetition would indicate that the end of the age had arrived. God's people would then know that the coming of the Lord to rapture His people to glory was "at hand." This should give true believers an incentive to redouble their efforts to win lost souls to Christ before it is too late. Are you, child of God, faithfully witnessing to your lost loved ones, friends, and neighbors?

Second, the Lord's reference to *"the days of Noah"* in this text was also meant to give assurance to God's people. Just as Noah and his family entered the "Ark" of safety before the flood of God's judgment came upon the ancient world, so the Lord will take New Testament believers into the safety of Heaven itself before the terrible Tribulation judgment comes upon *"this present evil world," Galatians 1:4*. See also **1 Thessalonians 5:9** and **Revelation 3:10**. Glory! Praise the Lord!

Third, *"the days of Noah"* are also a merciful final warning to the wicked of this present generation, extended by our *"longsuffering"* Lord, **2 Peter 3:9; 3:15**. When wickedness, violence, and death are prevailing everywhere, just as it was in *"the days of Noah,"* [and even as it is today], then even the lost should know that it is time to *"seek the Lord," Isaiah 55:6-7; 2 Corinthians 6:2*.

But the Lord didn't stop there. In order to reinforce this important truth, the Lord then told His disciples that there would also be a repetition of.....

The Days of Lot

The repetition of *"the days of Lot"* is also one of the things God's people were to *"watch"* for. This repetition would indicate to God's people that the end of this present age is swiftly drawing to a conclusion.

Today we see a repetition of *"the days of Lot"* occurring. But the wickedness that accompanied those days is no longer confined to one or two cities. Rather, gross immorality, sexual perversion, wickedness of all kinds, and a consuming lust for

material possessions, wealth, and power, is now occurring on a world wide basis. The whole world today has become like Sodom. God have mercy!

But let God's people take heart. Just as Lot was bodily removed from Sodom before it was destroyed, so all true believers will be bodily removed **"from this present evil world"** [*Galatians 1:4*] before the beginning of the Tribulation. See **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:9**, and **Revelation 3:10**. Praise the Lord! Glory! Hallelujah!

Then the Rapture

The Lord then described an event which the inspired Apostle said would take place **"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye..."** **1 Corinthians 15:52**. In verses **34 – 36** the Lord describes what occurs at the **"moment"** God's people are raptured to glory.

The Lord pointed out that two people will be sleeping in the same bed at night. At the instant the rapture occurs the true believer will be taken. The unbeliever will be left in the bed, verse **34**.

He further added that two people will be at the mill having their grain ground into meal. Again, the true believer will instantly be **"caught up"** to be with the Lord, **1 Thessalonians 4:17**. The unbeliever will be left standing at the mill, verse **35**.

The Lord also stated that two people will be working together in a field. Suddenly the true believer **"shall be taken."** The unbeliever will be left alone in the field, verse **36**.

These verses are very revealing.

These verses tell us that the rapture will take place all around the earth at the exact same instant. The Lord points out that somewhere on the earth it will be night, and people will be in bed asleep. But somewhere else on the earth it will be noon, afternoon, or evening; the time when the gathered grain is brought to the mill to grind it into flour. But in yet another place on the earth it will be during the morning hours when the reapers are out in the field gathering in the harvest. Folks, this makes it plain that true believers will be **"caught up"** all over this earth at the same instant regardless of their "time zone." Glory! How great and mighty and wonderful is our Lord and Savior.

The "eagles" Again

The disciples did understand that there was to be a rapture; a catching away. The Lord had just described it for them. But apparently they didn't understand that it was to be world wide, for they asked the Lord a simple question; **"Where, Lord?"** verse **37**. It is obvious they wanted to know **"where"** the rapture was going to take place.

What a wonderful answer the Lord gave to those disciples. The Lord's answer was, ***"Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together."*** Wow! Glory!

Folks, this verse is very different from the similar passage in ***Matthew 24:28***. It is not in the same context, it does not deal with the same time period, it does not involve the same people, and it is not saying the same thing. The two passages may be similar, but they most definitely are not the same. Now, by God's grace, I will demonstrate this truth for our readers.

The Greek word translated as ***"body"*** in this verse is the word, *"soma."* This word literally means, *"the body; the living body; a dead body; the body of flesh."* See Thayer's Greek Lexicon, page 611, Strong's No. 4983. This Greek word is used in the New Testament when speaking of individuals, both living and dead. It is the basic word in the New Testament for a *"body."* What is interesting is that this is the exact word that is used when referring to the actual literal body of Christ, ***Matthew 27:58***, the bodies of those believers who arose after the resurrection of Christ, ***Matthew 27:52***, the body of the *true believer* in ***Romans 8:11, 8:13, and 8:23***, and in ***Philippians 3:21***. It is also the exact same word that is used when referring to the spiritual ***"body of Christ,"*** the Lord's church. See ***1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:11-12, Colossians 1:18***, and other verses setting forth the same truth. This word is used 145 times in the New Testament, and the vast majority of those times it is speaking of a *"living body."* So we can conclude that the word ***"body"*** as used in ***Luke 17:37***, in keeping with the context, is referring to the bodies of God's people [*"the body of Christ"*], wherever they may be on this earth at the time of the rapture.

This is reinforced by the Lord's reference to the ***"eagles."*** This context is a rapture context, and in this context the Lord is fulfilling His promise to His people. What promise? The one made in ***Isaiah 40:31***, ***"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."*** Praise the Lord! Glory to God!

Those Troublesome Eagles

Folks, don't let these ***"eagles"*** trouble you anymore. By carefully studying and ***"rightly dividing"*** the Word, it is obvious that:

The ***"eagles"*** in ***Matthew 24:28*** represent ***"all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven," Revelation 19:17***, that will feast on the dead bodies of the wicked following the Lord's return to Israel at the end of the Tribulation.

But the ***"eagles"*** in ***Luke 17:37*** represent all true New Testament believers [*"the body of Christ"*] who will be ***"caught up.....to meet the Lord in the air"*** at the time of the rapture before the Tribulation. Glory! Glory to God! Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." (1 John 3:1-3)



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All comments, questions, or correspondence should be addressed to:

[Last Call Gospel Ministry](#)
[3900 Clark Lane, Lot C-10](#)
[Columbia, MO 65202](#)

or via email to:

fmrqld5@aol.com
- or -
fmrqld5@yahoo.com



NOTE FROM PEGGY: If you wish to donate to Pastor Riley to help him spread the Word of the Most High, please mail your contributions to him [at the above address](#). I know Pastor well enough to know that he is way too humble to ask for help, but trust me, he could use it! Pastor is in his 70's, and not only pastors a church near his home, but also works an extra job to make ends meet AND writes all these marvelous articles for the glory of the Lord and for our pleasure. Thanks goes to Yahweh El Shaddai, and to KC of 5 Doves for giving me the idea to put this note here in the first place.