

Message Two

The Rapture of the Overcomers

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:23-25; 14:26-35; 17:26-36; 21:34-36

I. If we want to save our soul-life, we will lose it, but if we lose our soul-life for the Lord's sake, we will save it—Matt. 10:39; Luke 9:23-25; 14:26-35:

- A. To save the soul-life is to allow the soul to have its enjoyment and to escape suffering; to lose the soul-life is to cause the soul to lose its enjoyment and thereby to suffer—Matt. 16:25.
- B. To lose the soul-life is to lose the enjoyment of the soul, and to save the soul-life means to preserve the soul in its enjoyment—Mark 8:35.
- C. To deny the self is to reject the soul's desire, preference, and choice—Luke 9:23.
- D. We must deny our soul, our soulish life, with all its pleasures in this age, so that we may gain it in the enjoyment of the Lord in the coming age—1 Pet. 1:9.
- E. If we allow our soul to suffer the loss of its enjoyment in this age for the Lord's sake, we will cause our soul to have its enjoyment in the kingdom age; we will share the Lord's joy in ruling over the earth—Matt. 25:21, 23.

II. If we lose our soul-life, we may participate in the rapture of the overcomers—17:26-36; 21:34-36:

- A. In order to participate in the rapture of the overcomers that we may enjoy the Lord's parousia (presence, coming) and escape the great tribulation, we must overcome the stupefying effect of man's living today—17:26-30:
 - 1. The conditions of evil living that stupefied the generation of Noah before the deluge and the generation of Lot before the destruction of Sodom portray the perilous condition of man's living before the Lord's parousia and the great tribulation—Matt. 24:3, 21.
 - 2. As followers of the Lord Jesus, we need to overcome the stupefying effect of the world's indulgent living by losing our soul-life in this age—Luke 17:31-33.
- B. Preserving the soul-life is related to lingering in the earthly and material things—vv. 31, 33:
 - 1. We linger in the earthly things because we care for our soul's enjoyment in the present age—cf. 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - 2. Lot's wife became a pillar of salt because she took a lingering look backward at Sodom, indicating that she loved and treasured the evil world that God was going to judge and utterly destroy—Luke 17:32.
 - 3. Lingering in the earthly things for the sake of our soul's enjoyment will cause us to lose our soul; that is, our soul will suffer the loss of its enjoyment in the coming kingdom age—Luke 17:33.

III. Luke 17:31-36 speaks of our reaction to the rapture call:

- A. These verses depict the soul-life in its engagement not with sinful things but with the things of earth; the Lord's charge here is related to the believers' overcoming in their practical life—vv. 34-36.

- B. Whether or not the living believers participate in the rapture of the overcomers depends on their reaction to the call to go; the rapture will occur secretly and unexpectedly—v. 31:
 - 1. This call will not produce a miraculous last-minute change in us that has no relation to our previous life with the Lord.
 - 2. In that moment we will discover our heart's real treasure; if this treasure is the Lord Himself, there will be no backward look—v. 32.
 - 3. We need the cross to work in us a thorough detachment in spirit from everything and everyone other than the Lord Himself—v. 31.
- C. Certain ones are taken because they have overcome the stupefying effect of self-indulgent living in this age to be raptured into the enjoyment of the Lord's parousia—vv. 26-30, 34-36.

IV. In 21:34-36 the Lord Jesus warns us to take heed to ourselves and to be watchful at every time, beseeching that we would “prevail to escape all these things which are about to happen and stand before the Son of Man”:

- A. *Prevail* here means to have strength and ability; the strength and ability to escape the great tribulation come from watching and beseeching—v. 36.
- B. *Escape* refers to being raptured before the great tribulation—Matt. 24:21.
- C. *All these things which are about to happen* are all the things of the great tribulation.
- D. *Stand before the Son of Man* corresponds with *standing* in Revelation 14:1, indicating that the raptured overcomers will stand before the Savior on Mount Zion in the heavens before the great tribulation.