

Luke: 17:20–37

From Catena Aurea:

20. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Because our Saviour, in His discourses which He addressed to others, spake often of the kingdom of God, the Pharisees derided Him; hence it is said, And when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come. As though they said tauntingly, “Before the kingdom of God come, which Thou speakest of, the death of the cross will be Thy lot.” But our Lord testifying His patience, when reviled reviles not again, but the rather because they were evil, returns not a scornful answer; for it follows, He answered and said, The kingdom cometh not with observation; as if he says, “Seek not to know the time when the kingdom of heaven shall again be at hand. For that time can be observed neither by men nor angels, not as the time of the Incarnation which was proclaimed by the foretelling of Prophets and the heraldings of Angels.” Wherefore He adds, Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! Or else, They ask about the kingdom of God, because, as is said below, they thought that on our Lord’s coming into Jerusalem, the kingdom of God would be immediately manifested. Therefore our Lord answers, that the kingdom of God will not come with observation.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now it is only for the benefit of each individual that He says that which follows, For behold the kingdom of God is within you; that is, it rests with you and your own hearts to receive it. For every man who is justified by faith and the grace of God, and adorned with virtues, may obtain the kingdom of heaven.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. (lib. de prop. sec. Deum.) Or, perhaps, the kingdom of God being within us, means that joy that is implanted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. For that is, as it were, the image and pledge of the everlasting joy with which in the world to come the souls of the Saints rejoice.

22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

23. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them.

24. 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.

25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. When our Lord said, The kingdom of God is within you, He would fain prepare His disciples for suffering, that being made strong they might be able to enter the kingdom of God; He therefore foretells to them, that before His coming from heaven at the end of the world, persecution will break out upon them. Hence it follows, And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, &c. meaning that so terrible will be the persecution, that they would desire to see one of His days, that is, of that time when they yet walked with Christ. Truly the Jews oftentimes beset Christ with reproaches and insults, and sought to stone Him, and oftentimes would have hurled Him down from the mountain; but even these seem to be looked upon as slight in comparison of greater evils that are to come.

THEOPHYLACT. For their life was then without trouble, for Christ took care of them and protected them. But the time was coming when Christ should be taken away, and they should be exposed to perils, being brought before kings and princes, and then they should long for the first time and its tranquillity.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now His disciples supposed that He would go to Jerusalem, and would at once make a manifestation of the kingdom of God. To rid them therefore of this belief, He informs them that it became Him first to suffer the Life-giving Passion, then to ascend to the Father and shine forth from above, that He might judge the world in righteousness. Hence He adds, But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.

17:26–30

26. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

CHRYSOSTOM. (Hom. 1, in Ep. 1. ad Thess.) For refusing to believe the words of warning they were suddenly visited with a real punishment from God; but their unbelief proceeded from self-indulgence, and softness of mind. For such as a man's wishes and inclinations are, will also be his expectations. Therefore it follows, they eat and drank.

AMBROSE. He rightly declares the deluge to have been caused by our sins, for God did not create evil, but our deservings found it out for themselves. Let it not however be supposed that marriages, or again meat and drink, are condemned, seeing that by the one succession is sustained, by the other nature, but moderation is to be sought for in all things. For whatsoever is more than this is of evil.

THEOPHYLACT. For when Antichrist has come, then shall men become wanton, given up to abominable vices, as the Apostle says, Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. (2 Tim. 3:4.) For if Antichrist is the dwelling-place of every sin, what else will he then implant in the miserable race of men, but what belongs to himself. And this our Lord implies by the instances of the deluge and the people of Sodom.

17:31–33

31. In that day, he which shall he upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32. Remember Lot's wife.

33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

AMBROSE. Because good men must needs on account of the wicked be sore vexed in this world, in order that they may receive a more plentiful reward in the world to come, they are here punished with certain remedies, as it is here said, In that day, &c. that is, if a man goes up to the top of his house and rises to the summit of the highest virtues, let him not fall back to the grovelling business of this world.

AUGUSTINE. For he is on the housetop who, departing from carnal things, breathes as it were the free air of a spiritual life. But the vessels in the house are the carnal senses, which many using to discover truth which is only taken in by the intellect, have entirely missed it. Let the spiritual man then beware, lest in the day of tribulation he again take pleasure in the carnal life which is fed by the bodily senses, and descend to take away this world's vessels. It follows, And he that is in the field, let him not return back; that is, He who labours in the Church, as Paul planting and Apollos watering, let him not look back upon the worldly prospects which he has renounced.

THEOPHYLACT. Matthew relates all these things to have been said by our Lord, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, that when the Romans came upon them, they who were on the housetop should not come down to take any thing, but fly at once, nor they that were in the field return home. And surely so it was at the taking of Jerusalem, and again will be at the coming of Antichrist, but much more at the completion of all things, when that intolerable destruction shall come.

AMBROSE. Because thus she looked behind, she lost the gift of her nature. For Satan is behind, behind also Sodom. Wherefore flee from intemperance, turn away from lust, for recollect, that he who turned not back to his old pursuits escaped, because he reached the mount; whereas she looking back to what was left behind, could not even by the aid of her husband reach the mount, but remained fixed.

AUGUSTINE. Lot's wife represents those who in time of trouble look back and turn aside from the hope of the divine promise, and hence she was made a pillar of salt as a warning to men not to do likewise, and to season as it were their hearts, lest they become corrupt.

THEOPHYLACT. Next follows the promise, Whosoever shall seek, &c. as if he said, Let no man in the persecutions of Antichrist seek to secure his life, for he shall lose it, but whoso shall expose himself to trials and death shall be safe, never submitting himself to the tyrant from his love of life.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. How a man may lose his own life to save it, St. Paul explains when he speaks of some who crucified their flesh with the affections and lusts, (Gal. 5:24.) that is, with perseverance and devotion engaging in the conflict.

17:34–37

34. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

37. 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.

AMBROSE. He rightly says, night, for Antichrist is the hour of darkness, because he pours a dark cloud over the minds of men while he declares himself to be Christ. But Christ as lightning shines brightly, that we may be able to see in that night the glory of the resurrection.

AUGUSTINE. (de Qu. Ev. lib. ii. qu. 41.) Or He says, in that night, meaning in that tribulation.

THEOPHYLACT. Or He teaches us the suddenness of Christ's coming, which we are told will be in the night. And having said that the rich can scarcely be saved, He shews that not all the rich perish, nor all the poor are saved.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. For by the two men in one bed, He seems to denote the rich who repose themselves in worldly pleasures, for a bed is a sign of rest. But not all who abound in riches are wicked, but if one is good and elect in the faith, he will be taken, but another who is not so will be left. For when our Lord descends to judgment, He will send His Angels, who while they leave behind on the earth the rest to suffer punishment, will bring the holy and righteous men to Him; according to the Apostle's words, We shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet Christ in the air. (1 Thess 4:17.)

AMBROSE. Or out of the same bed of human infirmity, one is left, that is, rejected, another is taken up, that is, is caught to meet Christ in the air. By the two grinding together, he seems to imply the poor and the oppressed. To which belongs what follows. Two men shall be in the field, &c. For in these there is no slight difference. For some nobly bear up against the burden of poverty, leading a lowly but honest life, and these shall be taken up; but the others are very active in wickedness, and they shall be left. Or those grinding at the mill seem to represent such as seek nourishment from hidden sources, and from secret places draw forth things openly to view. And perhaps the world is a kind of corn mill, in which the soul is shut up as in a bodily prison. And in this corn mill either the synagogue or the soul exposed to sin, like the wheat, softened by grinding and spoilt by too great moisture, cannot separate the outward from the inner parts, and so is left because its flour dissatisfies. But the holy Church, or the soul which is not soiled by the stains of sin, which grinds such wheat as is ripened by the heat of the eternal sun, presents to God a good flour from the secret shrines of the heart. Who the two men in the field are we may discover if we

consider, that there are two minds in us, one of the outer man which wasteth away, the other of the inner man which is renewed by the Sacrament. These are then the labourers in the field, the one of which by diligence brings forth good fruit, the other by idleness loses that which he has. Or those who are compared we may interpret to be two nations, one of which being faithful is taken, the other being unfaithful is left.

AUGUSTINE. (de Qu. Ev. ut sup) Or there are three classes of men here represented. The first is composed of those who prefer their ease and quiet, and busy not themselves in secular or ecclesiastical concerns. And this quiet life of theirs is signified by the bed. The next class embraces those who being placed among the people are governed by teachers. And such he has described by the name of women, because it is best for them to be ruled by the advice of those who are set over them; and he has described these as grinding at the mill, because in their hands revolves the wheel and circle of temporal concerns. And with reference to these matters he has represented them as grinding together, inasmuch as they give their services to the benefit of the Church. The third class are those who labour in the ministry of the Church as in the field of God. In each of these three classes then there are two sorts of men, of which the one abide in the Church and are taken up, the other fall away and are left.

AMBROSE. For God is not unjust that He should separate in His reward of their deserts men of like pursuits in life, and not differing in the quality of their actions. But the habit of living together does not equalize the merits of men, for not all accomplish what they attempt, but he only who shall persevere to the end shall be saved.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. When He said that some should be taken up, the disciples not unprofitably inquire, 'Where, Lord?'

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. As if He said, As when a dead body is thrown away, all the birds which feed on human flesh flock to it, so when the Son of man shall come, all the eagles, that is, the saints, shall haste to meet Him.

AMBROSE. For the souls of the righteous are likened to eagles, because they soar high and forsake the lower parts, and are said to live to a great age. Now concerning the body, we can have no doubt, and above all if we remember that Joseph received the body from Pilate. (Matt. 28.) And do not you see the eagles around the body are the women and Apostles gathered together around our Lord's sepulchre? Do not you see them then, when he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall behold him? (Rev. 1:7.) But the body is that of which it was said, My flesh is meat indeed; (John 6:55.) and around this body are the

eagles which fly about on the wings of the Spirit, around it also eagles which believe that Christ has come in the flesh. And this body is the Church, in which by the grace of baptism we are renewed in the Spirit.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Ev. l. ii. c. 7.) these things which Luke has given us in a different place from Matthew, he either relates by anticipation, so as to mention beforehand what was afterwards spoken by our Lord, or he means us to understand that they were twice uttered by Him.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

17:20–21 The Kingdom is Present Now

The Kingdom of God Comes by Faith.

Cyril of Alexandria: These miserable men ask in mockery, “When will the kingdom of God come?” This is like saying, “Before this kingdom of which you speak comes, cross and death will seize you.” What does Christ reply? He again displays his long-suffering and incomparable love to humanity. Reviled, he does not revile again. Suffering, he does not threaten. He does not harshly scold them, but because of their wickedness, he does not stoop to give them an answer to their question. He says only what is for the benefit of all people: that the kingdom of God does not come by watching. “Behold, the kingdom of God is within you.” He says, “Do not ask about the times in which the season of the kingdom of heaven will again arise and come. Rather, be eager that you may be found worthy of it. It is within you. That is, it depends on your own wills and is in your own power, whether or not you receive it. Everyone that has attained to justification by means of faith in Christ and decorated by every virtue is counted worthy of the kingdom of heaven.” Commentary on Luke, Homily 117.

Faith Gives Supernatural Knowledge.

Isaac of Nineveh: “The kingdom of the heavens is within you.” You should not hope to find it in a place. It does not come in observation, according to the word of Christ. Ascetical Homilies 53.

The Kingdom of God is Righteousness, Peace and Joy.

John Cassian: If the devil has been driven out and sin no longer reigns, then the kingdom of God is established in us. As it is written in the Gospel, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, ‘Lo here,’ or ‘Lo, there.’ Truly I say to you that the kingdom of God is within you.” The only thing that can be “within us” is knowledge or ignorance of the truth and the affection for righteousness or sin by which we prepare our hearts to be a kingdom of Christ or the devil. St. Paul described the nature of this kingdom in this way: “For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” If the kingdom of God is within us and is righteousness, peace and joy, then someone that remains in these is surely within the kingdom of God. Someone that remains in unrighteousness, conflict and the melancholy that kills the life of the spirit is already a citizen of the devil’s kingdom, of hell and of death. These are the signs whether it is God’s kingdom or the devil’s. Conference 1.13.

To Partake of the Kingdom.

Ambrose: Asked by the disciples when the kingdom of God would come, the Lord said, “The kingdom of God is within you,” through the truth of grace and not through the slavery of guilt. Let those that would be free be servants in the Lord. As we share in service, we also share in the kingdom. He said, “The kingdom of God is within you.” He would not say when it would come. He said there would be a day of judgment, so that he instilled in all terror of the judgment to come, and he did not add the guarantee of its postponement. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.33.

17:22–25 The Son of Man Must Suffer

Jesus Prepares His Disciples for Persecution.

Cyril of Alexandria: He now speaks to the holy disciples as his true companions. He says, “The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and will not see it.” ... He would have them prepared for all that can cause people grief. He wants them ready to endure patiently so that approved they may enter the kingdom of God. He warns them that before his coming from heaven at the consummation of the world, tribulation and persecution will precede him. They will wish to see one of the days of the Son of man, such as those when they were still going around with Christ and speaking with him. Commentary on Luke, Homily 117.

One Who Knows the Signs Knows the End.

Ambrose: He who knows the signs of the coming judgment also knows the end. Why would he not know? He is like flashing lightning, since as the Light, the Son of God illumines the inner part of the heavenly mystery. "In that hour," it says. He also knows the hour, but he knows it for himself, he does not know it for me. He then suitably asserts that the cause of the flood, fire and of the judgment proceeded from our sins, because God did not create evil, but our actions devised it for themselves. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.35–36.

Jesus Will Come in Glory Like Lightning.

Cyril of Alexandria: At the end time of the world, he will not descend from heaven obscurely or secretly, but with godlike glory and as dwelling in the light which no one can approach. He declared that his coming will be like the lightning. He was born indeed in the flesh of a woman, to fulfill the dispensation for our sakes. For this reason, he emptied himself, made himself poor, and no longer showed himself in the glory of the Godhead. The season and the necessity of the dispensation summoned him to this humiliation. After his resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and enthronement with God the Father, he will descend again. He will not descend with his glory withdrawn or in the lowliness of human nature. In the majesty of the Father with the companies of the angels guarding him, he will stand before him as God and Lord of all. He will come as the lightning, and not secretly. Commentary on Luke, Homily 117.

The Kingdom Must Come Through Suffering Before It Comes in Glory.

Cyril of Alexandria: That they might know that he was about first to undergo his saving passion, abolish death by the death of his flesh, put away the sin of the world, destroy the ruler of this world, ascend to the Father and in due time appear to judge the world in righteousness, he says that he must first suffer many things. Commentary on Luke, Homily 117.

17:26–33 The Examples of Noah and Lot

Judgment Will Come Suddenly.

Cyril of Alexandria: To show that he will appear unexpectedly and with no one knowing it, the Lord says that the end of the world will come and be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot. He says, "They were

eating and drinking, and were taking wives and being made the wives of men. They were selling and buying and building,” but the coming of the waters destroyed the one, while the others were the prey and food of fire and brimstone. What does this signify? It signifies that he requires us to be always watchful and ready to make our defense before the tribunal of God. Commentary on Luke, Homily 117.

The Flood Was Baptism for Believers, Death for Unbelievers.

Augustine: In the days of Noah this preaching to them was futile because they did not believe when the patience of God waited for them for many years in which the ark was built. Its building was in a sense a kind of preaching. In the same way today, their imitators do not believe. They are shut up in the darkness of ignorance. They are like in a prison, looking in vain on the church being built throughout the whole world. Judgment threatens them as did the flood in which all the unbelievers perished. The Lord says, “As in the days of Noah, so will it be also in the days of the Son of man. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” Since this signified a future event, the flood also signified baptism for believers and death for unbelievers. There is also a symbol in what was spoken and not done, where it is written about the stone that signifies Christ. Two effects were foretold. It is a stumbling block for unbelievers and a building for believers. letter 164.

Leaving a Spiritual Life for a Carnal One.

Augustine: Regarding the saying, “He that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house, and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat,” it can be suitably taken in a spiritual sense. In all our trials, each one must take care not to be overcome or to come down from a spiritual height to a carnal life. He who had progressed should not look back by turning toward the past or failing to reach out to the future. This is true of every trial. How much greater care must be prescribed in a trial such as that foretold for the city as “Such as has not been from the beginning, neither will be”? How much more this is true for that final tribulation which is to come on the world, that is, the church spread through the whole world? Letter 199.32.

The Rich are those on the Rooftops.

Cyril of Alexandria: The Savior ... was speaking of the last day, that is, the end of this world.... Strengthening them to recall the last day and the end time, he commands them to disregard all earthly and temporary matters and look only to one end, the duty of everyone saving his soul. He says, “He that is on the

housetop, do not let him go down to the house to carry away his goods.” In these words, he apparently means the one who is at ease, living in wealth and worldly glory. Those that stand on the housetops are always conspicuous in the eyes of those who are around the house. Commentary on Luke, Homily 118.

Those Working in the Field are Sowing the Word of God.

Ambrose: “He that will be on the housetop, do not let him go down. He that will be in the field, do not let him turn back.” How may I understand what is the field unless Jesus himself teaches me? He says, “No one putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.” The lazy person sits in the farmhouse, but the industrious person plants in the field. The weak are at the fireplace, but the strong are at the plough. The smell of a field is good, because the smell of Jacob is the smell of a full field. A field is full of flowers. It is full of different fruits. Plough your field if you want to be sent to the kingdom of God. Let your field flower, fruitful with good rewards. Let there be a fruitful vine on the sides of your house and young olive plants around your table. Already aware of its fertility, let your soul, sown with the Word of God and tilled by spiritual farming, say to Christ, “Come, my brother, let us go out into the field.” Let him reply, “I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride. I have gathered my vintage of myrrh.” What is better than the vintage of faith, by which the fruit of the resurrection is stored and the spring of eternal rejoicing is watered? Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.43.

Persevere in the Faith.

Cyril of Alexandria: He says, “Even if anyone is in the field, in the same way, do not let him turn back.” That means if anyone is found devoted to work and occupied in labor, earnestly desiring spiritual fruitfulness and gathering the wages of virtuous toil, let him hold firmly to this diligence. Let him not turn back. As Christ himself has again said somewhere, “No one that puts his hand to the plough and turns back is fit also for the kingdom of heaven.” It is our duty to maintain our religious exertions without wavering and to persevere in them with undaunted wills or else we may suffer the kind of fate that befell the woman at Sodom. We take her as an example because he says, “Remember Lot’s wife. For when she was rescued from Sodom, but would afterward have returned, she became a pillar of salt.” That means she became foolish and stonelike. Commentary on Luke, Homily 118.

Lot's Wife Looked Back at Her Possessions.

Ambrose: For this reason, the Lord says, "Remember Lot's wife," who because she looked back, lost the function of her own nature. Satan and Sodom are behind. Flee excess and shun extravagance. Know that not everyone can flee to the mountain. Remember that the one who did not return to his old pursuits, as if to Sodom, escaped because he came to the mountain. She, who was weaker since she looked back, could not come to the mountain. She remained, although her husband's help supported her. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.45.

The Soul Going Toward Salvation Must Not Look Backward.

Origen: "The law is spiritual" and the things that happened to the ancients "happened figuratively." Let us see if perhaps Lot, who did not look back, is the rational understanding and the courageous soul. His wife here represents the flesh. The flesh always looks to vices. When the soul is going toward salvation, it looks backward and seeks pleasures. Concerning this, the Lord also said, "No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." He adds, "Remember Lot's wife." The fact that "she became a little statue of salt" appears to be an open indication of her foolishness. Salt represents the wisdom that she lacked. Homilies on Genesis 5.2.

To Lose Your Life You Save It.

Cyril of Alexandria: Whoever loses his life shall certainly save it. This is what the blessed martyrs did, enduring conflicts even to loss of blood and life and placing on their heads as their crown their true love for Christ. Those who, from weakness of resolution and mind, denied the faith and fled from the present death of the body, became their own murderers. They will go down to hell to suffer the penalties of their wicked cowardice. The judge will descend from heaven. He will call those who with all their heart have loved him and earnestly practiced a completely virtuous life, saying, "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world." He will pass a severe and overwhelming sentence on those who have led careless and unrestrained lives or have not maintained the glory of faith in him, saying to them, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire." Commentary on Luke, Homily 118.

17:34–35 Some Taken, Some Left Behind

Christ Comes at Night.

Ambrose: He fittingly said, “night,” because the Antichrist is the hour of darkness. The Antichrist spreads darkness in the hearts of people, when he says he is the Christ.... Christ, like flashing lightning, scatters the spheres of his light throughout the world. He does not wander through the desert. He is not enclosed in some other places, because the Lord says, “I fill heaven and earth.” He shines with the light of his splendor, so that we may see his glory in that night of the resurrection. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.46.

A Charitable Life.

Cyril of Alexandria: By the two who are in one bed, he seems to hint at those who live in rest and plenty. They are equal to one another, as far as being possessed of worldly affluence. The bed is the symbol of rest. He says, “One of them will be taken, and one will be left.” How is one taken? Not all those who are possessed of wealth and ease in this world are wicked and merciless. Commentary on Luke, Homily 118.

Only One is Righteous.

Cyril of Alexandria: He says, “Two women will be grinding at a mill. The one will be taken, and the other left.” By these he again seems to mean those who live in poverty and labor. Even in these, he says that there is a certain vast difference. Some have carried the burden of poverty courageously, honoring a serious and virtuous way of life. Others have been of a different character. They are planners for every wicked practice and all shamefulness. There will be even in their case a full and exact investigation of their manners. The good will be taken, and he that is not good will be left. Commentary on Luke, Homily 118.

Believers and Unbelievers.

Ambrose: Two people in this world, which is very often compared with a field, are believers and unbelievers. One will receive the reward of their merits; therefore the faithful one is taken, but the faithless is left. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.52.

17:37 The Signs Will Be Clear

The Eagles are the Women Who Gather Around Christ's Body at the Tomb.

Ambrose: "Answering, they said, 'Where, Lord?' " The disciples asked this. The Lord predicted where they must flee, when they must stay, and of what they should be wary. He summarized everything in a general definition, saying, "Wherever the body will be, the eagles will be gathered together there." Let us first speculate what the eagles are, so we may determine what the body is. The souls of the righteous are compared with eagles, because they seek the heights, leave the depths behind, and reportedly reach a great age. David also says to his soul, "Your youth will be renewed like that of an eagle." If we understood the eagles, we cannot doubt concerning the body, particularly if we remember that Joseph received the body of Christ from Pilate. Does it not seem to you that the eagles around the body are Mary of Cleopas, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of the Lord, and the assembly of the apostles around the Lord's tomb? Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.54–55.

The Saints Gather around the Sacrament.

Ambrose: He says concerning this body, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." Around this body, eagles fly on spiritual wings. Around the body, eagles believe that Jesus has come in the flesh, because every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. Where faith is, there is the sacrament and the dwelling place of holiness. The body is also the church, in which we are renewed in the spirit through the grace of baptism, and the frailties of old age are restored for ages of new life. Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 8.56.