

Luke 17:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. Jesus provides the reason His return won't require announcement: it will be self-evident. **As the lightning** (ὥσπερ ἡ ἀστραπή, *hōsper hē astrapē*) introduces the simile. Lightning **that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven** (ἀστράπτουσα ἐκ τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν εἰς τὴν ὑπ' οὐρανὸν λάμπει, *astraptousa ek tēs hypo ton ouranon eis tēn hyp' ouranon lampei*) describes lightning's visible reach—from horizon to horizon in an instant.

Lightning possesses three qualities relevant to Christ's return:

1. **Sudden**—no advance warning, it strikes unexpectedly
2. **Visible**—everyone sees it simultaneously, regardless of location
3. **Unmistakable**—no one debates whether lightning occurred. **So shall also the Son of man be in his day** (οὕτως ἔσται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ αὐτοῦ, *houtōs estai ho huios tou anthrōpou en tē hēmera autou*)—Christ's return will share these characteristics.

No secret rapture, no gradual manifestation, no ambiguity. Revelation 1:7 confirms: 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.'

The phrase **in his day** (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ αὐτοῦ, *en tē hēmera autou*) designates the

appointed time of revelation and judgment. Just as 'the day of the Lord' in Old Testament prophecy described God's intervention in history (Joel 2:1-11, Amos 5:18-20), 'the day of the Son of man' marks Christ's return in glory. This day brings vindication for the righteous and judgment for the wicked—separation, not secret removal.

Historical Context

Lightning was universally recognized as dramatic divine manifestation. In Old Testament theophanies, lightning accompanied God's presence (Exodus 19:16, Psalm 97:4, Ezekiel 1:13-14). Jesus appropriates this imagery for His parousia (Matthew 24:27). The comparison assured first-century disciples—confused by delay and false messiahs—that they wouldn't miss Christ's return. No insider knowledge needed; the event would be cosmically obvious.

Early church fathers understood this literally. They rejected secret rapture theories and taught visible, glorious return: Irenaeus, Tertullian, Chrysostom all affirmed bodily, public parousia. Modern dispensational theology's secret rapture doctrine (popularized in 19th-20th centuries) contradicts Jesus' lightning metaphor. The return will be sudden and visible to all, separating believers from unbelievers in global judgment (Matthew 24:40-41), not secret removal before tribulation. Jesus' warning stands: when He returns, everyone will know simultaneously—like lightning illuminating the entire sky.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the lightning metaphor challenge secret rapture theology and reinforce the public, visible nature of Christ's return?

2. What comfort does the promise of Christ's unmistakable return provide amid confusion and competing end-times scenarios?
3. How should the certainty of sudden, visible return affect daily Christian living and readiness?

Interlinear Text

ὥσπερ	γὰρ	ἡ	ἀστραπή	ἡ	ἀστράπτουσα	ἐκ	τῆς
as	For	G3588	the lightning	G3588	that lighteneth	out of	G3588
G5618	G1063		G796		G797	G1537	
ὑπ'	οὐρανὸν	εἰς	τὴν	ὑπ'	οὐρανὸν		
the one part under	heaven	unto	G3588	the one part under	heaven		
G5259	G3772	G1519		G5259	G3772		
λάμπει	οὕτως	ἔσται	καὶ	ὁ	υἱὸς	τοῦ	ἀνθρώπου
shineth	so	be	shall also	G3588	the Son	G3588	of man
G2989	G3779	G2071	G2532		G5207		G444
ἐν	τῇ	ἡμέρᾳ	αὐτοῦ				
in	G3588	day	G846				
G1722		G2250					

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 24:27 (Light): For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Matthew 24:30 (Parallel theme): And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Zechariah 9:14 (Light): And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

2 Peter 3:10 (Parallel theme): But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the

elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 (Parallel theme): For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

James 5:8 (Parallel theme): Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 (Parallel theme): That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

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