

There seems to be no temporal or logical connection between chapter 17 and what precedes it in chapter 16. Chapter 17 is a collection of sayings of Jesus.

Offences (17:1-10)

Jesus explained to His disciples that offences will come to them (17:1). We should not expect to serve Christ for years without offences coming. Jesus added, “But woe unto him, through whom they come” (17:1). The one causing a child of God to stumble has committed an offence against Christ, an offence so great that he would prefer that a millstone was tied around his neck and he be cast into the depths of the sea rather than face his punishment from God (17:2). Because of the seriousness of the sin of causing a child of God to stumble, Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves” (17:3).

Jesus then instructed His disciples in how to handle offences. If a brother sins against another, the innocent brother should rebuke the one committing the sin. If he repents, the innocent brother should forgive him (17:3). As often as the sinning brother repents and seeks forgiveness, the innocent brother should be willing to forgive him (17:4).

The disciples perceived how difficult obeying this instruction would be and said, “Lord, increase our faith” (17:5). Jesus then instructed them that genuine faith removes the deep-rooted problems which prevent forgiveness (17:6). Jesus is not saying that a man with genuine faith can literally move trees and plant them in the seas. He is expressing that genuine faith can overcome the deep-rooted problems which prohibit him from forgiving his brother.

Using the parable of a servant, Jesus reminded His disciples that

every man stands before God in need of His divine grace (17:7-10). A servant who works all day is not served by his master at the dinner table; instead, when he comes in from his outdoor work, he then must prepare supper for his master. When the master has finished dining, he does not thank his servant for waiting on him. He expects



this conduct because the man is his slave. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do” (17:10).

Various Sayings

Luke 17

In this manner Jesus taught that works are not meritorious—we cannot put God in our debt by good works. We are God’s servants who have “done that which was our duty to do.” Part of our duty is to forgive those who sin against us. When we have done that, we have only done what God commanded us to do; we have no grounds for boasting. Nor

have we done more than the Lord demands.

Cleansing of Ten Lepers (17:11-19)

While traveling to Jerusalem (cf. 9:51), Jesus passed through

Samaria and Galilee. At some unnamed village, He met ten lepers. They stood afar off (as the law demanded, cf. Lev. 13:46) and begged for mercy. Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priest, the one appointed to pronounce them clean (Lev. 14:2-32). As they went on their way, they were cleansed of their leprosy. One of the ten, a Samaritan, turned back to give thanks to God for his cleansing. Noting the absence of gratitude on the part of the nine, Jesus asked, "Where are the nine?" Having received from Jesus what they wanted, they went on their way.

His disciples would desire the days when they walked and talked with Him but He would no longer be on earth (17:22). Men would say that the Christ was here or there, but His disciples should not believe such tales (17:23). For when the Lord returned, His return would be as visible as the lightning in the heaven (17:24). However, before His second coming could occur, Jesus had to first suffer many things and be rejected by that generation (17:25).

When Jesus comes again, He will find men still clinging to the

Jesus returns, men will not have time to gather the things from their houses; hence, Jesus is using this to teach men to maintain a detachment from worldly possessions. "Who-so-ever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (17:33). (Unlike the parallel passages in Matt. 24:17,18 and Mark 13:15,16, these verses make no allusions to the destruction of Jerusalem and fleeing from that city to another city. In both verses, the idea of detachment from earthly possessions is emphasized.)

At the second coming of Christ, a great separation will occur (17:34-35). One will be taken and another will be left. (This verse is not teaching that the righteous will be removed from the earth and the wicked left behind. For a study of what will become of this world at Jesus' second coming, see 2 Peter 3; for a study of the resurrection see John 5:28-29.) Those who seek to save their life will lose it and those who lose their life will save it.

The disciples asked the Lord, "Where, Lord?" Their question reflects their misunderstanding of the teaching of Jesus. They are concerned about the geographical location where these things will occur. Jesus replied, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together" (17:37). The figure is taken from the manner in which vultures hover around a dead body. One does not have to know where the body is; he can easily detect the dead body by the hovering vultures. In a similar manner, Christ's disciples will not have to wonder where these events will occur. They will be conspicuous and obvious.

The example of Noah and Lot are cited to show that the world continued in the ordinary affairs of life until God's judgment came.

The Coming of the Kingdom (17:20-37)

Some Pharisees approached Jesus demanding to know when the kingdom would be established. They expected a temporal kingdom complete with an army to overthrow the Romans. Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" (17:20). It is a spiritual kingdom that is not established by an army invading and overthrowing an existing government. "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (17:21).

Jesus then began to discuss His death, burial, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and second coming. He pointed to the time when

temporal, material things of life, just as they were in the days of Noah and Lot. Men will be involved in the ordinary affairs of life, not giving any thought to the Lord's coming (17:26-30). Without warning, Jesus will come again. Those who point to signs of Jesus' second coming misunderstand these Scriptures. The example of Noah and Lot are cited to show that the world continued in the ordinary affairs of life until God's judgment came.

Men's clinging to earthly things will continue unabated until Jesus comes again (17:31). Jesus instructs men not to have this attitude toward material possessions, reminding them of Lot's wife (17:32). When

Questions

1. Why is it impossible to avoid offences (17:1)? _____

2. What punishment is worse than having a millstone tied about one's neck and being cast into the sea (17:2)?

3. What obligation does the innocent brother have when someone sins against him (17:3)? _____

4. How often must a man forgive the one sinning against him (17:4)? _____
5. What prompted the apostles to say "increase our faith" (17:5)? _____

6. What is meant by moving trees in 17:6? _____

7. What is taught in 17:7-10? _____

8. What spiritual problem did the nine lepers whom Christ healed have? _____
9. Why is the nationality of the leper who returned and thanked Christ for healing him important (17:16)? _____

10. In what sense is the kingdom of God "within you" (17:20-21)? _____

11. What is taught about Jesus' coming in 17:23-24? _____

12. What is the comparison between the days of Noah and Lot and those at the time Jesus will come again? _____

13. What should we remember about Lot's wife (17:32)? _____

14. What is taught about the second coming in 17:34-36? _____

Answering Denominational Error

The Catholic doctrine of works teaches that man can do more works than are necessary in order to go to heaven. What does Luke 17:10 teach about this subject? _____

