

# OpenTheo

## Luke 17



### Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In Luke 17, Steve Gregg discusses the idea that stumbling is inevitable in life, though it does not necessarily indicate sin. However, causing someone to sin or become spiritually damaged holds responsibility and should be avoided. Forgiveness and reconciliation are important, and one's faith may increase through obeying God and witnessing His fulfilled promises. Jesus' return may come unexpectedly, emphasizing the importance of living righteously and forgiving others.

### Transcript

So now we come to the 17th chapter of Luke, and this chapter has both the teaching of Jesus and a miracle of Jesus, and at the end of the chapter there's some difficult eschatological questions to answer with reference to what Jesus says after verse 20. It's an interesting passage, but it'll be one that requires some analysis. However, at the beginning it says, Then Jesus said to the disciples, It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come.

It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Now, the word offend here, skandalon or skandalizo is the verb, skandalon is the noun. It can be translated as it is here, as offense and offend.

The word offense is here a noun, which is skandalon in the Greek, and to offend in verse 2 is a verb, and it's skandalizo. But it can be translated offend and offense, or in many cases it's more often translated stumbling or stumble or stumbling block. To place a stumbling block before somebody.

Now, a stumbling block, of course, is a metaphor. It presupposes the idea that life is a walk, and stumbling is something that's a defect in your walk. Maybe even a sin is stumbling, and probably it is.

When James says, In many things we all stumble, he probably means we all commit sins. And a stumbling block is that which causes somebody to stumble, or causes somebody to sin. So, Jesus' words can be translated, and they are in many translations.

It is impossible that stumbling blocks would not come, but woe to him by whom the stumbling block comes. If somebody causes another person to sin, woe unto him for doing so. It is clear that Jesus says in the world that we live in, there will be occasions to stumble, plenty.

There will be temptations. There will be things that we could stumble over. They could result in our sinning.

It is not suggested, though, that you have to sin, but it's inevitable that there will be occasions to sin. And many of these occasions will be caused by the actions of other people. And he's saying, if your actions cause a person to sin, woe unto you.

Now, here, to sin may be a reference to sin generically, or to something specific, because the word scandalon and scandalizo can mean offensive, to be offended. And, for example, there was a time the disciples said to Jesus, Do you know what you said offended the Pharisees? And it's the same word. And we think of being offended along the lines of being somewhat made angry, somewhat.

What would be a good synonym for the way we usually talk about being offended? Usually, taking somebody's behavior or words as an insult to us, or something that just goes against our grain. It's a low grade of anger. To take offense means that you're somewhat upset with somebody, you're angry at somebody because of something they've said or done.

And this word can be taken either way. It's not possible to live in a world where people won't be doing things that could offend you or stumble you. By the way, the word, of course, can cross over to mean both things, because if you are offended with somebody and that interrupts your ability to love them, then that itself is a sin.

For you to not love somebody, for you to not be charitable towards somebody, is a sin itself. So, if I am offended, I am sinning, in a sense. At least if I'm offended in the sense that I don't love this person because of what they've done.

So, Jesus seems to be teaching that we're not living in a world that'll be easy. There will be lots of times when we could be offended or stumbled by other people's behavior. In one sense, we need to watch out for that.

But even more, we need to watch out for being the person who provides such stumbling blocks and offenses to other people. Because, he said, the person who does cause another person to sin or does cause another person to be offended is damaging that person spiritually, and God will hold you responsible for that. And there's a sense in which you'd be better off to have been thrown into the sea with a millstone around your neck than to have done such a thing.

Now, he does not say that anybody is going to be thrown into the sea with a millstone

around their neck. That's a pretty horrible sounding fate. Sounds like something the mafia does to people.

Put them in some concrete sandals or concrete boots and throw them off the pier. It's a horrible idea of being drowned. And Jesus is painting a picture that is intended to invoke a horrible image.

But he's not saying that's what'll happen. He's saying what will happen is worse than that. He's saying it would be better for you to have that happen to you than what apparently will be the fate of those who do such things.

Or maybe he's saying it would have been better for you to have died horribly than to live to do this thing. I'm not sure exactly, but he's making it very clear that we cannot take this lightly. You would certainly not take lightly any actions that would perhaps result in you being thrown off the pier with concrete sneakers on.

And so also, you must not take lightly the idea of stumbling other people or offending other people in a way that causes them not to follow Christ anymore, especially. And I think that's probably what he has in mind, especially. Believers have many occasions where they could decide not to be followers of Christ anymore.

And one of the occasions that really stumbles people the most is when believers do things that aren't consistent for Christians to do. Most people who complain about Christianity are complaining about Christians and something in many cases specific about Christians, something a Christian has done to them that was wrong or something Christians in general are seen as doing that they find offensive. And of course, we can't help it if people are offended by righteousness.

And there are times when being offended is even a righteous thing. We should be offended at certain things, but a personal offense against oneself is something we don't have to succumb to. I am offended at human trafficking.

I'm offended at child molesters. I'm offended at their behavior. It makes me upset.

And I don't think that's what Jesus is talking about unless, of course, my being offended causes me to think there can't be a God if he allows such things as that. He's talking about sin primarily and probably defection from Christianity. If you are responsible for someone else defecting, you are bearing a tremendous amount of responsibility and the fate that you can expect is very much to be feared.

Take heed to yourselves if your brother sins against you, rebuke him. And if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day and seven times in a day returns to you saying, I repent, you shall forgive him.

Now this is one way to deal with the offenses that others present to you. If somebody

does something offensive to you, well, forgive him. At least if it's a sin.

Sometimes you might get offended because you're just too touchy and the person didn't even do anything sinful. You just don't like what they did and you're just thin-skinned and you're just taking offense to it when it's not even any legitimate thing to take offense to. But Jesus talks about a situation where you really do have occasion to be offended.

Somebody really has sinned against you. Someone has wronged you. This is just the kind of situation where you tend to, by nature, feel some kind of resentment or offense toward them.

But Jesus said, don't. Instead, go and confront them. Now he says rebuke them.

We might think of rebuke as a rather harsh way to confront somebody, but it doesn't have to mean that. Rebuke just means that you point out their error to them. You tell them they're wrong.

Paul talks about a situation like this and indicates that it's not a harsh rebuke that is called for at all. In Galatians 6, in verse 1, Galatians 6,1 says, Brethren, if any man is overtaken and trespassed, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Now if someone has sinned against you, your task is to restore them.

That's the term Paul uses. You restore them in a spirit of gentleness. But that does involve confrontation.

If somebody is sinning, you don't just ignore them, you restore them. You don't just act like nothing's happening. You go and you, in some measure, address it.

And so, Jesus is not arguing for a harsh rebuke. He's simply saying, there needs to be a confrontation here, rather than just letting it slide. Now there are times when you can let it slide.

Jesus is not talking about every situation. There are times when little tiny things that people do that are wrong may rub you the wrong way, but you can just let it go. There's no sense to confront people at every imperfection that they have.

That would be a very unpleasant way to conduct relationships. Every time somebody does something they could have done better, or a slight irritation in their voice that wasn't called for, and you rebuke them about that or whatever. Jesus is talking about the kinds of things that necessarily would destroy relationships and would keep you from loving them.

That would be such an offense to you that you cannot easily trust or love or relate with

them, continue a relationship with them, instead of letting the relationship go by the way and ignoring it and saying, well, who needs them? Well, you should go and try to restore the relationship, try to reconcile. And if the person in question has wronged you, you tell them what they've done wrong. And if they repent, it's all over.

That is no more offense. The offense is resolved. You let it go.

You forgive them. You don't stay offended at them. And he says that's true no matter how many times they do it.

If it happens seven times even in a day, and this is no doubt a hyperbole because it's very difficult to imagine how anyone could seriously sin against you seven times in one day, even after being forgiven all the previous times, yet to do it a seventh time. That's a pretty short space of time, but Jesus is, I think, using hyperbole to say you should always, no matter how much you think you've endured from this person, you should always be prepared to forgive them when they repent. Now, of course, the question then arises, what if they don't? There is that scenario also.

Jesus tells us how to resolve conflicts here if the person in question is good-hearted and doesn't really want to hurt you. Maybe the offense was unintentional. Maybe they were just dull-witted and didn't realize that they were doing something that was offensive to you.

And so you tell them, and because their heart is good, they say, oh, I'm sorry. I'm terribly sorry. I didn't really want to do that.

Or maybe they'd say, I really was in a bad mood, and I really did have bad feelings towards you, but I realize that's wrong, and I don't want to do that anymore. That's repentance. But there's also another scenario possible that you confront them and they say, hey, mind your own business, or get the beam out of your own eye.

Who are you to confront me? You're not perfect or whatever. I mean, people can have other reactions besides repentance to being confronted. Proud people often don't like to be confronted.

They don't like to be told they did the wrong thing. And instead of repenting, they'll make every kind of excuse for their wrong actions or react in anger. And now, what do you do in a case like that? Well, of course, that's where Matthew 18 comes in.

Another passage where Jesus talked about reconciliation. He developed additional scenarios. In Matthew 18, 15, Jesus said, moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.

If he hears you, that is, if he repents, you've gained your brother. You're forgiven. Thus far, it's identical to what Jesus said here in Luke 17.

Your brother sins against you, you confront the matter, you go and tell him his fault, he hears you, he repents, you forgive him. That's all done now. You've won your brother.

It's as if nothing happened. But what if he doesn't repent? That's the question we're asking. That is the question that's not addressed in Luke 17, but it is addressed here.

Verse 16, Matthew 18, 16 says, but if he will not hear you, that is, he doesn't come over to your way of saying things, he doesn't repent. Take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. This would mean that if the brother you confront does not agree that he's wrong or needs to repent, then you need to bring some along who also know that what he did is wrong and who will confirm what you're saying.

Yes, this was a wrong you did. You need to repent of this. And so he knows it's not just you and your thin skin and your irksomeness and so forth that you're just easily offended.

Other people come in more objective who weren't sinned against themselves and say, yeah, what you did was wrong. You do need to make this right. You do need to repent.

So there's two or three witnesses to establish what you're thinking and what you're saying. Verse 17, if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. Now, at this point, even if he rejects the mouth of two or three witnesses, he still is granted another level of appeal, so to speak.

Now, he's got a difference between you and him as to whether he wronged you or not. There's two or more witnesses who agree with you that he did. And he's still not convinced.

He still is holding out that he's not in the wrong and he doesn't have to repent of anything. Well, okay, he still is considered to be possibly a good brother. He's just unconvinced, so you take it to the whole church.

The whole church then has to hear the case and decide whether he's wrong. And if they do agree with the others, the witnesses in you, then he needs to repent. And if he refuses even to hear the church, then let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

That is, you don't have to try to keep maintaining the relationship once you've gone so far. In the attempts of reconciliation, if the man is resistant toward reconciliation to the point where he won't even agree with the whole church telling him he's wrong, then, well, just like people in that society didn't try to hang out with publicans, although Jesus did, most people didn't, and heathen, well, let him be to you like that. You don't have to continue trying these attempts at reconciliation after you've gone this far.

All right, so Matthew 18 takes this teaching of Jesus in Luke 17 a little further, giving scenarios that don't come up in Luke 17. Now, Luke 17 5, And the apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith. So the Lord said, If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the seed, and it would obey you.

Now, this statement, increase our faith, it seems to come out of nowhere. And by the way, sometimes the gospels do stick in little pericopies that aren't related to the material before or after. It's possible that on an entirely different occasion that Luke is now sticking in here that the disciples once said, Lord, increase our faith, and he made this statement back to them.

If it is not a different occasion, if they're saying this as a result of what he has just said in the previous verse, then we would assume that what they're saying is, Lord, you're asking us to forgive somebody who is, you know, perennially sinning against us. So he says he repents. But to tell you the truth, after one or two or three times, I'm going to start holding a bit of a grudge toward this guy.

And you want me to keep forgiving him seven times in one day? This is asking a great deal of us. Now, why would that even be a matter of faith? Why would they, in that case, say, increase our faith as if he's asking of their faith more than their faith is capable of doing? What does faith have to do with this? Well, we are called to forgive people. And that always makes you vulnerable to being hurt by them more.

If you don't forgive them, you can isolate yourself from them. Maybe even punish them. That's the opposite of forgiveness.

And you can secure for yourself exemption from any further injury from them because you're not seeing them anymore. You're ignoring them. You're avoiding them.

Or you've put them behind bars. One way or another, you've taken matters in hand to prevent yourself from continuing to be hurt by this person. But if somebody is hurting you seven times in a day, and you keep forgiving them, and he keeps doing it, and you're supposed to keep doing that, it means you're remaining very vulnerable to being sinned against by this person.

And being sinned against can be painful and costly, depending on the nature of the sin that someone's committing against you. And therefore, you're making yourself endangered by being so forgiving. Now, I believe the teaching of Scripture is that you can afford to be forgiving, and by doing so, you are leaving your case in God's hands.

If you don't protect yourself in a cause, and you're doing what's right in the sight of God, then God will defend you. Peter says something very much like that in 1 Peter chapter 4. Actually, first of all, in 1 Peter chapter 2, he says that this is what Jesus did. In 1 Peter

chapter 2, Peter says about Jesus in verse 23, Who, that is, Jesus, when he was reviled, did not revile in return.

When he suffered, he did not threaten. In fact, when he suffered, we know that when he said his Father forgave them, they don't know what they do. He didn't revile or threaten them, he forgave them.

In so doing, he committed himself to him who judges righteously. Now, Peter doesn't say in so doing, but that's what I believe is the implication here. By not retaliating, by not threatening, by instead forgiving, Jesus made himself vulnerable to being killed, and even did die.

But in so doing, he took a higher ground and just left his fate in God's hands. He committed his fate to God, who is, of course, someone who judges righteously. There were others judging him unrighteously.

They were sinning against him, but he forgave them, and by forgiving them, rather than calling 12 legions of angels down to plop their heads off, he was committing himself into the hands of God. And, in fact, Jesus even said as much on the cross, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. He left himself in God's hands.

Now, it so happened, in doing so, he died. But because he was in God's hands, the outcome was what God wanted it to be, and he rose from the dead and is exalted highly and is reigning over the universe. In other words, if you put yourself in God's hands, it may not go immediately well for you.

It didn't go real well for Jesus immediately, but at least you're in God's hands. What's happening to you is what God is dishing out, and you can accept it from his hands. When Jesus was arrested in the garden, he had prayed three times that God would not let this cup be delivered to him, that it would pass from him.

But when it became clear that Father was giving him the cup, he said to Peter, put away your sword, the cup the Father has given me, shall I not drink it? I've surrendered myself to God. I've said, not my will but yours be done. I'm in God's hands.

He's given me this cup of suffering. I'm going to drink it. Why not? It's his will for me.

I'm committing my care and my safety not into my own hands, but into his, and I'll accept whatever his disposition is. And that's what Peter said Jesus did. Instead of threatening and reviling, he instead just committed himself into God's hands.

Now, Peter then says in chapter 4, 1 Peter chapter 4, that's exactly what Christians have to do in like circumstances. It says in 1 Peter 4, 19, therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to him. That's what Jesus did.

Jesus committed himself into God's hands when he was suffering. Instead of retaliating or protecting himself, he kept himself vulnerable and let God decide to vindicate him. If he would.

And he says, that's what you should do. When you suffer according to the will of God, you need to commit the keeping of your soul to him in doing good. That means by continuing to do the right thing.

How do you commit yourself into God's hands? Well, if you're doing good and someone's hurting you because you're doing good, then the temptation is to stop doing good so people won't hurt me anymore. He says, no, you keep doing good and you will just commit your case into God's hands that way. God will take your side.

God will take your case upon himself if you're doing what he wants you to do. So you, when you're suffering for righteousness sake, you commit yourself to God by continuing to do good. And you're committing yourself to him as to a faithful creator.

The idea being God can be trusted. He's a creator. He's the creator.

There's nothing he can't do and he's faithful, which means he will not betray you. If you commit yourself into his hands, you can trust him with the outcome. Now, that is, I believe, underlying Jesus' instruction about forgiving people.

If people keep hurting you and you keep forgiving them, aren't you kind of putting yourself in danger of them destroying you? I mean, if I keep forgiving them, that means I'm relinquishing my right to punish them. I'm relinquishing my right to retaliate. I'm relinquishing my right to even protect myself, maybe, from some of this.

How does that work out? Well, I'm committing myself into God's hands. If I don't protect myself, I need God to protect me. Now, that means I have to trust God.

And so in telling him to forgive your neighbor seven times in one day if he keeps hurting you, you better increase our faith because trusting God is what we need to be able to do and it's not so much easy for us to do. We need some help in this. Now, it's interesting that they would say increase our faith.

Faith is, generally speaking, man's responsible response to God. God speaks and we're supposed to believe. God promises and we're supposed to trust.

That's what faith is. The Jews who were supposed to go into Canaan did not profit from the Word of God because they didn't mix it with faith, the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 4. We are supposed to bring faith into the consideration. Now, of course, Calvinists say faith is just a gift that God provides and there's not everything untrue about that.

I mean, we have faith because God has allowed us to be persuaded by His Word or by whatever circumstances have influenced our faith. We still have to decide to believe because you can still, God can be extremely persuasive and a person can still say, I refuse to surrender. I refuse to believe and trust.

But it is true that God can increase our faith. God can provide it. It says in Romans 12 that God has given to every man a measure of faith.

And you remember that the man who brought his son, the demon-possessed son, to Jesus. Jesus said to him, everything is possible to those who believe. The man said, I believe but help my unbelief.

I have some faith, I just need more. Although we are responsible to have faith in God, strong faith is something we have every right to ask Him to help us with. It's our surrender to Him.

I have a little bit of faith, I want more. Help my unbelief. And so here also they said, Lord, increase our faith.

And that's a legitimate prayer. And I suppose that what Jesus answered them was intended to do just that. He said, so, the Lord said, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to the mulberry tree, be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you.

Now that's how He increases their faith, by telling them this. Now either He's saying, let me tell you a promise that you can believe in and that will help your faith. Or He's saying, you know, it's not so much that you need to have vast quantities of faith.

Even a mustard seed size is sufficient to do much more than you're aware of. A mustard seed is, you know, a very, very tiny seed. They're saying they want more faith, bigger faith, increase our faith.

And He's saying, well, you know, even if your faith is that small, you'd be amazed what can be accomplished. You think you don't have enough faith, but if you actually begin to use your faith, if you actually begin to move on your faith, if you actually begin to, you know, not even focus on your faith, but focus on what you're supposed to be doing, if God wants you to move a mulberry tree, your faith, a mustard seed size could do it. Now Jesus doesn't say if God wants it, but this is always to be understood.

We can't have faith to do things that God doesn't want. You can't just walk up to a mulberry tree outside and tell it to do that, and it will happen, unless God wants it to happen. He said a similar thing about mountains being moved.

And, of course, another passage, very similar teaching. This is important to know. I mean, Jesus is saying that miraculous things can be done, even with faith that doesn't

seem too impressive in terms of its size, but no doubt He's saying it's not so much that you need more faith, but you need to act upon the faith that you have, little as it may seem to be.

Much more can be accomplished than you imagine right now, because you don't think you have enough faith. Sometimes people say, you know, I wish I had the faith of some Christian that they admire. But really, what is faith but believing? Faith is just believing, believing God.

So, if someone says, I wish I had more faith, it's saying, I wish I believed God more. Well, how do you remedy that? You remedy it by believing Him more. That's something you do.

You can choose to believe or disbelieve something. Now, if something seems totally ridiculous, it's awfully hard to make yourself believe it, but you'd be amazed what ridiculous things people can believe. People can believe, what, six impossible things before breakfast.

Is that how it went, or something like that? In Alice in Wonderland, she said, I can't believe impossible things. And the queen said something like, oh, I think you underestimate yourself. I personally make a habit of believing six impossible things before breakfast every day.

I'm misquoting, but it's something like that. The truth is, people can believe crazy things, and we're not asked to do that. We're asked to believe credible things, but sometimes things even that are credible, we can choose to disbelieve.

Belief is more of a choice. And so, it's not a matter of saying, I just can't believe. It's a matter of saying, I won't believe.

If God says something is true, you can believe it if you want, or not. Sometimes, something is hard to believe, but only if you believe the person saying it is not honest or credible. If you believe that God tells the truth, it's not hard to believe him.

If you're not so sure that he tells the truth, then, of course, it's kind of hard to believe. Anybody who tells you anything, you can't believe them very easily if you think they're lying. But if you think they're telling the truth, how could you not believe them? That's why people are held responsible for whether they have faith or not.

That's why salvation is by faith, and condemnation comes from disbelieving, because it's a choice you make. You're culpable for it. You're not just a victim of little faith, and other people are just lucky because they happen to be endowed with a lot of faith.

Some people believe God more consistently because they choose to do so. Some people, not so much. I think Jesus said, and this is probably saying, it's not so much of whether

you have a lot of faith or not.

Just believe God, and anything he wants you to do, including miraculous things like trees being uprooted and thrown in the sea at a command, can happen. In other words, if you are told to forgive somebody seven times in one day, as you contemplate, you might think, I could never do that. But when it comes time to do it, just do it, and you'll find out, even if you think you have a lot of faith, it turns out you can do what you determine to do in obedience to God, and you'll find, no doubt, your faith will grow as a result of that.

You start obeying God, and you see that he does fulfill his promises, and you'll more naturally tend to believe him in the future. And Jesus said in verse 7, In which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink. Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.

So, likewise you, when you have done all the things which you are commanded, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do, and by implication, and nothing more. We've done only our duty. What's he saying here? He's saying you need to have the mentality of a slave, and a slave does not expect to be congratulated for doing the right thing.

That's his duty. He doesn't expect special bonuses and rewards for doing what his duty is to do. Slaves were men and women of very low social status.

They were usually people who had come into such poor economic circumstances that they would sell themselves. Almost anybody who could do anything else to pay their bills would not sell themselves into slavery, but the person who would sell himself into slavery was one who really couldn't take care of himself. And, frankly, being a slave was a positive thing for them compared to the circumstances they were in before. A person wouldn't sell himself into slavery unless that was the right thing to do.

So, the master is going to take care of all your needs and, in exchange, you do everything he wants with all your waking hours. You go out in the field and work all day in the heat of the sun because the master wants you to. You come in, you fix his dinner then.

You don't get to put your feet up and have someone else serve you. So, what do they expect? None. They know what their station is.

By becoming slaves, they've given up all their rights and they expect to do their duty, and they are expected to. And although they work harder than the average person and work long hours, they don't expect to get special congratulations or thanks or bonuses for that. That's what they're supposed to do.

And when they've done all their duty, they just say, what else? We're a slave. We expect nothing more than that. And Jesus said, this is the attitude you need to adopt.

And that is that once you've done everything God has commanded you to do, you don't think yourself to be special or great or deserving of special commendation. You just say, hey, this is my duty. What else? I don't deserve better than this.

This is obviously a teaching about your self-image. This is teaching you that contrary to your sinful tendencies, or you want to see yourself as worthy of certain privileges and respect and so forth, you just don't think about it that way. Whatever God has you doing, you just do it and don't think you're being deprived of anything.

This is what you do. You're a slave. What else are you going to do? Then obey God.

You deserve nothing but hell. And that being so, you're grateful just to have a role as a slave and not have to starve to death like you would if you didn't have a master to take care of you. So you just serve him and serve him and serve him and don't think that you deserve something more in life.

This is basically a teaching about the attitude you have about your sense of entitlement, your sense of privilege. There's such a sense of entitlement that people have in our day and age. And it's been encouraged by social policies and government policies and things like that.

Some people think the government owes them everything, food, a car, a house, all this stuff. And they've been encouraged to think that they should be recipients of all kinds of benefits. And Jesus says, don't take that attitude.

Consider yourself not worthy of any particular benefit. You're not focused on what you should be getting. You're focused on what you're supposed to be doing.

You're focused on your duties. Now, why would he give this teaching here? If we see verses 1 through 10 as like one continuous string of interaction, then we can see that it divides into kind of four different portions. One is where Jesus warns them not to offend other people because there's a penalty for that.

But also in that first section he says, but there will be people trying to offend you. There will be people putting stumbling blocks before you. Now you can overcome the offense by forgiving them.

And so he tells them to forgive. Now the disciples feel like that could be a stiff assignment. How do I forgive someone who sins against me seven times? Well, there's a couple things you need to realize.

You need to trust God and you need to have a low view of your own entitlement. That is

to say, if I become offended by somebody who's done something wrong with me, it's because I feel like I should have been treated better. I feel that they shouldn't be allowed to do that to me.

I deserve better than that. Now maybe I in fact do deserve better than that, but that's not to be my concern. You see, the faith exhortation speaks about having a high view of God.

And then this servant attitude has to do with having a low view of yourself. This is really the way to be able to operate as one who forgives routinely and does not take offense. Instead, I'll just entrust myself to God.

He's a faithful creator. I need to have a high view of God and I need to have a low view of myself because the only way I will really be getting offended is if I have a higher view of myself than I should. They shouldn't be allowed to do that kind of thing to me.

Or if I'm afraid that they're going to harm me because God isn't on the job, so I have a low view of God. The view I have of God placed in juxtaposition to the view I have of myself is that which will determine the ease or difficulty with which I can follow the instructions that he's given about forgiving people routinely who do me harm. And I think that there's a possibility that all these verses 1 through 10 may be part of a string of teaching that has to do with amplifying on that very principle.

Now we have a miracle related in verses 11 through 19. It says, Now it happened as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then, as he entered a certain village, there met him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

And they lifted up their voices and said to Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. So when he saw them, he said to them, Go, show yourselves to the priests. And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

Now one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus, giving him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, Were there not ten men cleansed? Where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? And he said to him, Arise, go your way, your faith has made you well.

Now this story is unique to Luke. We don't have it in the other Gospels. And it's interesting, it says that it happened as he went to Jerusalem that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

That sounds backward. If you're traveling in Galilee and Samaria toward Jerusalem, you'd be in Galilee first, then Samaria, and then Jerusalem. So you'd think it would say as he's traveling toward Jerusalem, he'd go through Galilee and Samaria, because that's really the geographical route.

You wouldn't go to Samaria and then Galilee if you're going toward Jerusalem, because you're going the wrong direction from Samaria then. So I assume that we're not supposed to take the Samaria and Galilee in that order. He's just saying he went through these regions, and he mentions them in reverse order, but they're still the same two regions he went through.

And it doesn't say where this happened, although Samaria was one of the places he went through. And the man who came back and thanked him was in fact a Samaritan. So maybe we're supposed to assume that this man was in his own home region, that Jesus was in Samaria when he encountered him.

However, Jesus' words at the end almost sound as if he's saying this man was a Samaritan, where the other nine maybe weren't. And why was it the Samaritan, this foreigner who comes back, and by implication these other nine weren't foreigners, they were Jews. It's hard to say.

This might have happened near the border of Galilee and Samaria, which is why it's not nailed down to one or the other. And it's interesting if in fact the other nine lepers were Jewish people rather than Samaritans, and this was the only Samaritan, that they would all be hanging out together, because Jews and Samaritans have nothing to do with each other, perhaps unless they're lepers. In which case, as outcasts from all society, a Samaritan was no more of an outcast than a leper.

And a Jewish leper was in the same condition as a Samaritan leper. So it would appear that perhaps adversity like this tends to break down racial prejudices when they share in that kind of adversity. Remember we saw that video, some of us the other day, about the restoration work done after Katrina in New Orleans.

How many of the people whose houses were damaged and so forth were people of black neighborhoods, and many of the people who came down to help them were white people. And it was mentioned by many observers that it was striking to see the white people helping out the black people. I guess what they're used to in the South there is of course separation more.

But because of adversity, racial barriers disappear. And in this case, apparently, probably nine Jewish lepers were associating with a Samaritan leper as a fellow because they all had the same problem. You know, this happens to the Christians too in persecuted countries.

When persecution comes on the church, all those denominational loyalties seem to melt away. And Richard Wurmbrandt said that in the underground church in Romania, there were no Catholics and Pentecostals and Baptists and Lutherans and so forth. They were just all Christians.

When people share a common crisis, the things that they have the luxury to divide over at other times seem to be pretty small. So here we have, I believe, some Jewish and Samaritan lepers together. Jesus entered a certain village and there met him these ten men who were lepers.

They begged him for mercy, obviously for healing. Instead of touching them as he did on a previous occasion with a leper where he touched him and healed him, he just told them, go show yourself to the priests. Now, on another occasion when he touched a leper and healed him, he said, now go show yourself to the priests and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for a testimony to them.

The idea being that it would be a testimony to the priest to see a leper who had been healed. In this case, he's sending them to the priest and they aren't healed. He's just saying, go show yourself to the priest.

Now, to do this would require faith on their part because they'd say, well, why would I show myself to the priest? Last time I saw him, he declared me a leper and told me to stay away from society and I still have it. I'm still a leper. What good, you know, the priest is going to do is throw me out.

But instead of doubting Jesus on this, all ten of them thought, well, what have we got to lose? And with their leprosy still infecting their bodies, they made the trip toward Jerusalem to see the priest. But all of them found that they were healed as they went. As they were obeying Christ, their leprosy began to heal.

The symbolism of this miracle may well be that leprosy is like a type of sin. And as we obey Christ, our sinfulness, our sinful condition progressively begins to get healed and we begin to be delivered of our sinfulness through a life of obedience to him. So as they're obeying him, the leprosy does seem to disappear.

And they noticed it. Now, nine of them said, wow, I'm not a leper anymore. I'm going to go down, show myself to the priest.

He'll declare me free and clear of leprosy, give me a clean bill of health. I can go home to my family and life can go on. But one of them said, yeah, but first I'm going to go back and thank Jesus for this.

Now, how far he had to go back, we don't know. We don't know how far they had traveled. But this man, however far he had traveled, could have just done what the others did and said, well, I'm going home.

You know, I've been separated from my family by this condition for however long it's been. I'm looking forward to being back with my friends and family. And he probably was looking forward to it, but he felt, you know, I really owe God some gratitude in this man.

I need to thank Jesus for this. So he delayed his restoration and went back to thank Jesus. It's kind of touching that he did so.

I know when I was younger, I used to read this story and say, well, isn't that great that this man, you know, went back and thanked Jesus. But Jesus didn't say, oh, I'm so touched that you came back. He said, where's the others? Thanking him is obligatory.

He didn't demand it, but he was apparently shocked that nine men could receive such a blessing from him and not have any more gratitude than that. You know, when I read the story as a younger person, I remember being somewhat surprised. Wow, this guy really shines in this story.

He goes back to thank Jesus. That's really a good thing for him to do. And Jesus didn't say, wow, that's a good thing you did.

He said, it's a bad thing what these other guys did. They haven't been thankful. Why haven't they come back and thanked me? And why would it be, he said, this foreigner, a Samaritan that would do it, implying that the others who didn't and who should have were not foreigners.

They were Jews. Again, the story tends to show not only Jesus' ability to heal every kind of sickness, including leprosy. It also is one of those stories that underscores that the Jews often were not as spiritually attuned or receptive or whatever, as godly as some of the Gentiles in some of the stories or in this case, a Samaritan was.

When Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan, he made the same contrast. In the 10th chapter of Luke, he told about a priest and Levite Jews who passed by the man and didn't help him. And a Samaritan helped him.

That would be a shocking element in the story that Jesus told to his hearers. But here again, a Samaritan in an actual true life case ends up showing greater, you know, appreciation for Jesus, greater virtue in that respect, than nine Jews. Now, verse 20, Now when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation, nor will they say, See here or see there.

For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you. Now, as you can see from the marginal note, within is a word in the Greek that could be translated among or in your midst. It's an ordinary word for within, but the Bible often uses it in the sense of in the midst of a group.

And I say that because this is an area where some people are confused. What is the kingdom of God? Now, the Jewish leaders didn't have any doubt that they knew what the kingdom of God was, though Jesus had to correct them on it in some measure. But they said, When will the kingdom of God appear? When will it come? Notice, of course, and

you know this, but many people don't, that the kingdom of God here again is clearly not a reference to heaven because heaven doesn't come.

Heaven is up there. Many people think that when we die, we go to the kingdom. But in the Bible, you don't go away to the kingdom.

The kingdom comes here. It's something that comes from heaven to earth, and it was coming in Christ. And the Pharisees, as Jews, expected the kingdom of God to come because there were many promises in the Old Testament that God would send one like David, who would be descended from David, who would establish God's kingdom on earth again.

Many prophets had mentioned it, and so the Jews were expecting it, and they were expecting the Messiah to do that. Now, Jesus was widely reputed to be the Messiah, and so the Pharisees saying, Well, when is this kingdom coming? Jesus had preached the kingdom of God is at hand in the initial part of his ministry, and they're saying, Okay, if it was at hand, where is it? But they were expecting the kingdom to be an externally visible phenomenon like David's kingdom, something that had an earthly throne, an earthly king, a political arrangement, a political kingdom on earth under a political king. And Jesus said, Well, it's not coming that way.

Remember, Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3, verse 3, he said, Unless you're born again, and he meant by that born of the Spirit, you cannot see the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God does not come, as he says here, with observation, which was a surprise to them. He says, Nor shall people say, Lo, here it is, or, Lo, there it is, for the kingdom of God is in your midst.

I think what he's saying here is that the kingdom of God is a spiritually discerned phenomenon, and it's right here among you, though you don't see it. It doesn't come in the observable way you think it will. It's not an externally visible phenomenon.

It's already here, and you don't see it. Now, when he said the kingdom of God is within you, some people have understood that to mean in your heart. The kingdom of God is in your heart, and so Jesus would be defining the kingdom of God as a personal inner experience.

And many Christians understand that to be the case. However, Jesus is not talking to people who had the kingdom in their heart. He's talking to Pharisees.

For him to say that to them would be a strange thing. Oh, yeah, you Pharisees, you have the kingdom of God inside of you. No, he's already told them on other occasions, they're of the father of the devil.

They're of a different kingdom. It's much more likely he is understanding this to mean within you, or that is to say, in your midst, within the group here, within the crowd here.

You would be the crowd collectively, and within the crowd, in your midst, there is the kingdom.

And that would simply be saying that Jesus, the king, and his disciples in the crowd are the kingdom. And the kingdom therefore has come in that way, but you haven't observed it because you're looking for a different kind of kingdom. You're looking for something political, and Jesus is not interested in starting a political kind of arrangement.

And so they have not seen it, though it has come. Then Jesus spoke to his disciples. Now, the words he spoke before that were to the Pharisees.

But having spoken of the coming of the kingdom of God, he now addresses the disciples. He said to them, the days will come when you desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. And they will say to you, look here or look there.

Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also shall the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will also be in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built.

But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he who is on the housetop and his goods are in the house, let him not come down and take them away.

And likewise, the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife, whoever seeks to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed, the one will be taken and the other left.

Two women will be grinding together, the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field, the one will be taken and the other left. And they answered and said to him, Where, Lord? So he said to them, Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

Now there's some obscure teaching here and one of the things that's obscure is even what event is he describing. Most of us probably immediately assume he's talking about the second coming. I personally have taken it that way myself and tend to see it that way, though there are some who think he's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem.

The reason for thinking that is because some of the material in this passage is also found

in Matthew 24, particularly the reference to days of Noah and to one being taken and the other left and so forth. These things are found in Matthew 24. Now Matthew 24, to a very large extent, is about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

We know this because it begins with Jesus predicting the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the disciples asking, When will that be? So he gives an answer. And the answer seems to be that within that generation it'll happen. And so much of what we read in Matthew 24 is clearly about what happened in AD 70, but it also has some of this information.

And so there are many who say, Well, we need to then understand this passage is about AD 70 as well. And frankly, that's kind of reasonable. And especially is it reasonable in view of verses 31 and 32, which advise that when that day comes, don't go back into your house, but flee.

Don't be like Lot's wife who lingered and looked back, but run from the judgment. Now, if he's talking about the second coming of Christ, there's nowhere to run to. But if he's talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, then running to the hills or whatever is exactly what Jesus advised his disciples to do in Matthew 24 also.

And that reference, therefore, seems to point in the minds of many to a 70AD kind of scenario. I still am a little stubborn about that, though I have to admit the strength of that argument. I just am inclined to think this is talking about the second coming of Christ for a number of reasons.

One is this material, when it appears in Matthew 24, is a second section of chapter 24 and could have changed its subject. And I personally think it does. Many do not agree with me about that.

But I think that the first part of Matthew 24 is about AD 70 and everything after about verse 34 in Matthew 24 is about the second coming. I could be wrong about this and there's many who think I am, but that's my present understanding. And it is that latter part of Matthew 24, the part that I think is about the second coming, that parallels things in this passage, at least some of the things in this passage.

Now, I think that this idea of one taken and the other left in a sudden manner does not resemble what happened in AD 70. Jesus compares it with the flood that suddenly comes unexpectedly and sweeps them away. Whereas what happened in AD 70 is something that built up for several years.

There was a war escalating for three years where by the time Jerusalem fell, it had been under siege for months. Its fall was fairly predictable. It wasn't a sudden thing that caught everyone by total surprise, like, say, the flood.

And therefore, what Jesus describes, I think, is more fitting to the events that Paul

describes related to the second coming of Christ than to AD 70. So, I mean, there's different views on this. I'm going to proceed as if this is about the second coming of Christ, which is yet future.

Now, he starts by saying, the day will come when you'll wish you could see one of the days of the Son of Man. I assume that means like he speaks of the days of Noah. The days of Noah were the days when Noah lived.

The days of the Son of Man, probably the days when the Son of Man was with them on earth. In other words, I'm going to be gone someday and you'll wish for these days that I'm with you again. You'll wish to see one of those days again when I was here, but I won't be here.

And by implication, I won't be here for a season, but I'll be back. And there will be additional days of the Son of Man in the future after I come back. But you're going to be looking back at the days when I was with you and you'll be wishing, you're desiring to see those days when the Son of Man was here.

And people will exploit your hunger to see me by saying, oh, he's over here in the desert, or you can go find him if you go over here in this secret place. He says, don't believe it. Because he said, the Son of Man in his day, not his days past, but the day future, the day of Christ, as Paul calls it, the day of God, the days of our Lord Jesus Christ, the day of the Lord.

These are all terms used in the epistles for the second coming of Christ. This is Christ's day. When his day comes, it'll be like a visible phenomenon seen by everybody, like the lightning that flashes from one part of heaven to the other.

Now, by the way, this is a non-issue right now, but, I mean, in terms of our concerns here, but the word lightning is a Greek word, *astrapi*, that means bright shining. It also can mean a lightning bolt. And that is how it's translated in every translation I'm aware of.

But the word *astrapi* is also used to mean a bright shining. And in Matthew 24, where this similar statement is found, Matthew 24, 27 says, for as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west.

Is that really so? Jesus is not teaching that it's so. He's assuming that it's so. As this is true, so also will it be.

But is that axiomatically true, that lightning flashes from the east to the west? Lightning usually follows a vertical path rather than a horizontal path across the horizon. Why does he say that? Well, if you take the word lightning to mean, or the word *astrapi* to mean bright shining, it makes perfectly good sense. Because, if he said, as the bright shining

flashes from the east to the west, we suddenly have a different picture than a bolt of lightning.

We're seeing a sunrise. The shining starts in the east and it goes to the west in a sunrise. And he'd be likening his coming to a sunrise, not to a bolt of lightning.

By the way, in Luke chapter 11 and verse 36, Luke 11, 36 says, if then your whole body is full of light having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light. The word bright shining there is *astrapi*. The bright shining of a lamp gives you light.

That word is *astrapi*, the same word that is translated lightning elsewhere. It can go either way. So when Jesus said, it's like lightning, he could say it's like the bright shining.

Now, in Luke it's not too clear what bright shining he means, but in Matthew, where he says the lightning flashes from the east to the west, certainly it seems to favor the notion he's talking about the sunrise, the bright shining that comes from the east and goes to the west. So, as I say, it's not too important to our concerns here in this present study of this chapter, but it raises intriguing questions as to the nature of the second coming of Christ, if it is more like a sunrise than it is like a bolt of lightning. Because sunrises happen somewhat gradually, and it does say in Proverbs chapter 4, the path of the just is like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

And Jesus' first coming was compared to a morning. Zacharias spoke of it as the day spring from on high. Anyway, I'm not going to go into that right now.

Someday, when we talk about eschatology, maybe I will. Suffice it to say that Jesus says his coming, his day, will be visible to everybody. And don't trust anyone who says he's come and he's hiding in some kind of a desert or in some kind of a secret place.

You'll be longing to see him, but don't succumb to this kind of seduction. There will be false Christs, and don't follow them. The real Christ, when he comes, everyone will see him come.

And there have been false Christs, and many have succumbed to it because they didn't heed this warning. He said it's going to be like the days of Noah. Now, some people think the days of Noah, since they were such wicked days, parallel the last days in terms of their wickedness.

Maybe they will, but he doesn't say so. He doesn't say, as in the days of Noah, they were murdering and raping and thieving. So shall it be.

He said, no, in the days of Noah, they're eating and drinking and getting married. Well, is that really all that bad? And when he compares it with the days of Lot, he doesn't say, as in the days of Lot, they were committing homosexual acts and doing horrible, immoral

things. He says, no, as in the days of Lot, in Sodom, they were buying and selling and planting and reaping.

And all these examples are ordinary daily things. Now, of course, there were very wicked things that were being done in the days of Noah that Jesus could have listed. There are very wicked things done in Sodom that Jesus could have listed.

The point is, he's not comparing the last days with the wickedness. He's comparing the last days with the obliviousness. The people before the flood were acting like life was going to go on forever.

They're eating regular meals. They're getting married like they have a future. They don't know the next day they're dying.

People are buying things and planting things as if there's a future, but there's none. They're totally oblivious to the danger they're in. It comes crashing in upon them when they least expect it.

That's what he's saying. He's not saying the days of Noah and the days of Lot were days in which, you know, people were very wicked. And thus, in the last days before Jesus comes, they'll be extremely wicked like that.

He's saying, no, they'll be as unaware as that. They'll be as clueless as that. They'll be involved in ordinary things and oblivious to the danger they're in.

That's what it'll be like. Now, I want to just go off on a slight rabbit trail, even though we've run out of time here. But there are those who are arguing for the pre-tribulation rapture who feel that this statement of Jesus proves the pre-trib rapture.

They say the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the flood are pictures of the great tribulation. And of course, we know that Enoch was, we might say, raptured before the flood. And they say Enoch is a picture of the church being raptured before the great tribulation.

Noah and his family sail through the flood. It's like the remnants of the Jews who'll be saved in the tribulation and make it through. In Lot's case, his leaving Sodom is the rapture.

And it says, the day he left Sodom, the fire fell. So it's like as soon as the church is raptured out, the judgment of the tribulation begins. As you can see, if you're objective at all, there's not any kind of merit in these arguments at all.

First of all, they assume that the flood represents the tribulation period or the destruction of Sodom does. But everywhere else in Scripture, the destruction of Sodom and the flood are likened to the second coming of Christ itself, not seven-year tribulation

period. The judgment described is at the second coming and is not, therefore, equating the judgment with some seven-year period and the Christian's got to get out of dodge before it comes.

It's rather, God is going to send judgment. It'll catch people by surprise. Of course, God's people will be spared through it, as Noah was and as Lot was.

Now, I'm going to pass over the housetop thing. I'm not sure exactly how to say that, except to say it could be a figure of speech saying, when this happens, it's so sudden that any contemplation of grabbing anything, changing any of your circumstances, it'll be too late. It's in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, Paul said.

And so, you know, you're not going to be able to go back and change any circumstance, you know, get stuff, you know, acquire for yourself more oil for your lamps or whatever. It's going to be too sudden. But I realize that this suggestion about verse 31 is not very intuitive and it may be wrong.

Remember Lot's wife does certainly suggest that you don't want to look back. You don't want to look back longingly on anything that's being destroyed behind you. If God's judgment is coming, you shouldn't be longing for your old house or your own friends, your old car, your old TV or, you know, whatever you left behind that you enjoyed so much, you shouldn't be longing for that.

Just realize that's under God's judgment now. You leave it behind and forget about it. Don't be like Lot's wife.

Now, I do want to say this, and this is how we'll close, because we have gone over an hour, but we haven't gone over an hour from 15 minutes, so I hope to close in just a few minutes here. There is this famous passage, two women will be grinding together, verse 35, one will be taken to the other left. Two men will be in the field, one will be taken in the other left.

He also said, I missed it, verse 34, two men will be in one bed, one will be taken in the other left. This I take to be referring to the suddenness and, what should we say, the particularness of God's judgment and his rescue of his people when he comes. It's interesting that Jesus is talking about a particular moment in time, it would appear, and yet two men will be in bed, because it's nighttime, others will be working out in the field, because at that same moment it's daytime.

Some have pointed out, and I think rightly so, that this presupposes what we know to be true about the earth. It's night and day at the same time in different places. This suggests something of a presupposition of the roundness of the earth, and even if whether scientists of that time knew it or not, if we could even speak of there being scientists in those days, Jesus knew it clearly.

He indicated that at that time some people would be in the middle of the night, asleep, some people would be in the middle of the day working out in the field. It does suggest Jesus' knowledge that there is night and day at the same time, which suggests some knowledge that the world is not flat. But more than that, the one taken in the other left needs to be properly identified, because it's very popular to assume that the one taken is the Christian is taken in the rapture, and the one left is the unbeliever who's left behind to be in the tribulation period.

Hence the famous novels and movies called Left Behind. They're based on this passage, basically. There's one taken and the other is left, left something, they assume left behind.

They believe the Christian is taken away, and the unbeliever is left behind to suffer the tribulation. However, there's reason to see this as the entire reverse of that popular notion, because if you look over at the parallel in Matthew 24, if we start reading at verse 37, it says, But as the days of Noah were, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark.

And they did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Two men will be in the field, one will be taken, and the other left. Two women will be grinding, one will be taken, and the other left.

Now notice he says, In the time of Noah, as soon as Noah and his family entered the ark, the flood came and took them, not Noah, but the wicked, took them all away. So it'll be when the Son of Man comes, one will be taken. The ones who were taken away in the flood were destroyed.

In fact, that statement about Noah in Luke 17 actually uses the word destroyed instead of taken. When he talks about those who entered the ark, it says in Luke 17, 27, Until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Matthew says, The flood came and took them all away.

Luke says, It destroyed them all. Those who are taken are the ones who are destroyed. And thus, when Jesus says one will be taken and the other left, the most natural way to understand it is when Jesus comes back, one will be destroyed, the other be left untouched, left unharmed, not left on the earth to go through tribulation while the other has been raptured into heaven.

But rather, one is taken in judgment, dead, they're killed. It's not talking about a rapture of the wicked. It's not about them being taken out of the earth, destroyed, like the people who were taken in the flood.

But the ones who are righteous are left. Now, this is an important point because we often

think that we're going away to heaven and God's going to abandon the earth to the wicked. The opposite is true in Scripture.

Very quickly in Proverbs 2.21-22 it says, The upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it. But the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it. The hope of the Jews was not that they would go to heaven, but that they would inherit the earth.

And that's what Jesus said to his disciples, Blessers of the meek, they shall inherit the earth. The earth is given to the sons of men. The earth was given to Adam.

Adam forfeited it, but God is restoring it. God is going to make a new heaven and a new earth in which dwells righteousness, and we will dwell in that earth. The earth is going to be given to Christ's disciples.

It says about Christ in Psalm 2.8 that God speaks to Christ in Psalm 2.8 and says, Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. Christ is going to receive the whole world, and the meek will reign and inherit the earth with him. It says that in Revelation 5.10. The saints are singing in heaven.

They say, We will reign on the earth. That's the goal. It's the wicked that will be uprooted from the earth, not the righteous.

The others will be left intact, unharmed. Now the final comment I want to make is in the last verse of Luke 17. Once Jesus made these three remarks about one is taken, the other is left, his disciples answered, Where, Lord? Where what? I assume they mean where will they be taken to? And he answers them.

Wherever the body is, this means the corpse, there the eagles will be gathered together. Now this statement is made by Jesus in another setting in Matthew 24. We won't look at that for the lack of our time, but I believe this reference where the corpse is, the eagles will be gathered together, or the vultures alternately, but eagles work.

I believe this was kind of a proverb in Israel, and I think it was even based on Job. In Job chapter 39, God is talking to Job about the eagles and noting the eagles behavior and all of that. And in Job 39, in verse 30, God says, It's young, meaning the eagles young, suck up the blood, and where the slain are, there it is.

That is, the young eagle is where the slain people are. Eagles can be found where there are slain bodies. Now some people say this must mean vultures because eagles only eat live food.

I once thought that too, until I lived in Idaho, and we once saw four bald eagles on the corpse of a cow eating it. So eagles apparently will eat dead food too. And it was like a

given in Job 39.30, wherever the corpse is, wherever the slain are, the eagles are there.

And Jesus says the same thing twice in different settings. I think it was like a proverb, like saying, where there's smoke, there's fire, or something like that. You know, we have these kinds of proverbs, and I think that I know they had them in Israel too.

And I think Jesus applies this proverb, like where there's smoke, there's fire. You say, where are they taken? Well, wherever there's corpses, there'll be eagles gathered. Sort of a cryptic statement, but apart from its proverbial character, it would seem to be saying, they are corpses.

You wonder where they are? They shouldn't be hard to find. Look for the circling eagles. Look for the circling vultures.

Look for the birds of prey that eat corpses, because that's where you'll find these people. They'll be dead. The ones who are taken are the ones who are killed.

And you can easily locate them if you're interested. Just look for the vultures. Look for the eagles.

So that is what I think he's talking about there. Now again, I want to say that many people think this whole section is about AD 70. A case can be made for it, and it may be that someday I myself will think that that's persuasive.

But as I've looked at it, I still find more reason to apply it to the Second Coming of Christ than to AD 70. So that's my present position.