

## LUKE 17

## THE COMING OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

After the severe rebuke given by our Lord to the Pharisees, in view of their selfish abuse of worldly wealth, Luke records four seemingly disconnected warnings that were given to the disciples. The first (verses 1-2) was against the peril of causing others to sin. In this world of selfishness and evil desires, our Lord declared that it is inevitable that such offenses will be committed; but He pronounced a solemn woe upon anyone who is guilty of this grievous fault. He warned His followers to take great care not to lead anyone astray, or cause anyone to stumble – particularly those who might be less mature than themselves, either in years or experience. In the second warning (verses 3-4), Jesus guarded His disciples against a lack of charity. He taught His followers to be always ready to forgive. He did not advise cowardly weakness, nor a spirit of indifference toward the sins of others. But an erring brother is to be reprovved with kindness; and if he sincerely repents, he is to be freely forgiven.

The twelve Apostles – probably in view of the particular responsibilities which rested upon them – now turned to their Master with a petition: “Lord, increase our faith” (verses 5-6). And the Savior’s reply contains another solemn warning – namely, that there is indeed a need for such an increase; in fact, a far greater need than the petitioners realized. Nevertheless, in Jesus’ reply, there is also a gracious promise. The disciples were lovingly rebuked for their lack of faith, but they were also reassured by a revelation of the unlimited power of faith. Our Lord asserted that if they possessed real faith – even if it was so small that it was to be compared with “a grain of mustard seed,” which is one of the tiniest objects in nature – they would be able to speak one word and accomplish incredible results. The followers of Christ today need to be reminded of the narrow limits to which faith is usually confined; as well as of the limitless possibilities which might be theirs, if their trust in Christ was more simple, more unquestioning, and more real.

The fourth warning that is recorded here rebukes the pride, the self-confidence, and the desire for praise and reward which too often characterizes those who call themselves the followers of Christ. Jesus taught that no human works, however perfect, can have any claim upon God for His favor. Even if it was possible for us to perfectly obey the entire Law of God, our doing so would merely be the fulfillment of that which was our duty in the first place. This truth is set forth in a short parable (verses 7-10), wherein the servant has labored faithfully in the field; and when the day is done, he merely continues to accomplish his appointed tasks throughout the evening. His master does not show any particu-

**Outline of the chapter:**

- ❖ *The Savior teaches about offenses, forgiveness, faith, and humility – verses 1-10*
- ❖ *Jesus cleanses the ten lepers – verses 11-19*
- ❖ *He teaches His followers about the coming of His Kingdom – verses 20-37*

lar gratitude to him, for he is doing that which he is expected to do anyway. So also, in the case of every person, a life of the most blameless holiness and love is nothing more than what God already requires of us; and therefore, it is no ground upon which a special reward can be demanded. Hence this parable rebukes all human pride, and cuts off all supposed merit that man hopes to obtain by his “good works,” instead of trusting in Christ alone.

The healing of the ten lepers (verses 11-19) begins the closing cycle of incidents which marked the last journeys of Jesus toward Jerusalem. It is very much like Luke to record this miracle, for the chief feature of this particular narrative is the gratitude and the blessing of a Samaritan; and Luke is always describing Jesus as not only the Savior of the Jews, but also of the whole human race! There is something of surprise and sadness in the question of Jesus, as He saw this restored leper lying at His feet. “Were not the ten cleansed?” He asked. “But where are the nine?” None of them returned to give glory to God; only this Samaritan did so. It is always surprising to find that ingratitude is so common among people! Nine out of ten will probably forget every favor that they may receive. And it is even more sad that among those who have received the salvation of Christ, we see so few who show real gratitude by leading lives of joyous service. Very few declare that they are constrained to live for Him Who died for them.



Either in mere curiosity or with a desire for debate, the Pharisees approached Jesus with a question as to when the Kingdom of God would come (verses 20-21). Jesus replied that it would not come in such a manner as they were expecting; nor would it appear as a visible development of which they could say, “It is here” or “there” – for, in His own Person, the King was already “in the midst” of them; and yet they did not recognize it. However, to the disciples who trusted Him, it was possible for Jesus to answer, in more detail, the question of the coming of the Kingdom which shall be inaugurated in splendor upon His return (verses 22-37). He told them that they must first expect a period of long delay, and He also said that many deceivers would point to physical places and specific times of His appearing. However, He made it very clear that when He does appear, it will be with suddenness and unmistakable splendor – like the lightning which flashes in an instant across the whole heavens. When He does reappear, the human race will be in a state of carnal security; they will be careless, indifferent, and absorbed in the usual occupations of life – just like the people in the days before Noah’s Flood. But in the midst of all this, those who are to share in the glories of Christ’s Kingdom must be looking for their returning Lord. His people must watch, pray, labor, and wait!

*Lord, help us to never forget to give gratitude and thanksgiving to You for Your gracious healing of our sin-sick souls, as well as for Your daily Providence! Amen.*