

LUKE

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Chapter Seventeen

Luke 17:1-4

He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! (2) "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. (3) "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. (4) "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Jesus is informing His disciples of a certainty in the world where they will be taking His message. There will be stumbling blocks entering their domain so they need to be prepared to deal with them. Paul also warned of wolves entering the flock to take away disciples and he had a lot of experience dealing with them:

Acts 20:29-31 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (30) and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. (31) "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

Jesus warns them but also attaches a woe to the people who bring about such stumbling blocks. Such people may not receive their justice until after death as did the rich man in the previous chapter, but justice will be accomplished. The “little ones” are not identified but the context in the last few chapters inform us that such people are like Lazarus, the prodigal son, the poor, crippled, and blind, the man with dropsy, and the crippled woman. The words mean an immature person or young, immature pupils to the gospel message. Paul also warned against causing someone to stumble: *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.* (Rom 14:13) The eating of certain kinds of food could cause someone who is one of these “little one” to stumble:

1Cor 8:9-13 But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. (10) For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? (11) For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. (12) And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. (13) Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

Thus we disciples of Jesus need to be careful to tell the truth but to do so in love and concern to not cause someone to stumble: *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,* (Eph 4:15)

Although we must be careful about how we teach others, we must also be prepared to rebuke a brother when he sins against us and to forgive a brother in Christ when he/she repents. The word “brother” in Scripture means a fellow disciple of Jesus. From the prodigal son narrative, it might seem that sin is something to be ignored but here Jesus wants His disciples to understand that sin on the part of a fellow disciple is serious and must be confronted. The elder brother’s attitude in the prodigal son narrative is to be avoided by any of His disciples. In verse four Jesus emphasizes the importance of this repentance/forgiveness cycle. The sinning of seven times in a day is not to be taken literally but emphasizes the importance of a disciple being ready to forgive as often as needed for the ability to forgive comes from a heart that has been forgiven by God: *'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* (Matt 6:12) Jesus similarly told Peter to forgive many more times than just seven:

*Matt 18:21-22 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (22) Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*

Luke 17:5-6

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" (6) And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.

The need to be careful concerning teaching people so that a stumbling block is not set before a disciple and the need to be able to quickly and often forgive a fellow disciple frightened the disciples as they were very concerned about failing in both instances. From all of their experiences with Jesus they knew that they had been given some faith but they asked Jesus to increase it so they could obey Him. A mustard seed is a very small seed and the mulberry tree is a sycamine tree that grows to about 35 feet and has an extensive root system so it would be very difficult to uproot. Jesus is then using the very small to effect a very large result and is comparable to the mountain in the following:

- *Matt 17:20 And He *said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.*
- *Mark 11:23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him.*
- *1Cor 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*

Jesus is then telling them that they already have enough faith to do what is needed of one of His disciples. Remember that faith is the “enabling power of God” and it will enable the disciple to do whatever God commands the disciple to accomplish. The secret to success as a disciple is not just the great faith of the disciple but that he has faith in a great God.

Luke 17:7-10

"Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? (8) "But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me

while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'? (9) "He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? (10) "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

A slave does not have any off-time. Correspondingly a disciple of Jesus is always a disciple and will always be willing to do whatever the Lord orders. After he has done all that the Lord requires, the disciple will be given a time to eat and drink in the new life as rewards for his work here. The servant had been working in the field and then came into the house to do some other duties but he needed to change clothes to properly serve the master. Similarly disciples must be prepared when asked to perform other duties. A person may have served Jesus faithfully for many years in some particular area and then he is called to be a teacher. This new calling requires the person to prepare himself for teaching by obtaining required degrees and devoting himself to the new calling. Paul did not boast because of his preaching but he had to carry out that assignment: *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.* (1Cor 9:16) Disciples should not expect praise for just obeying Jesus in doing some tasks but should only proclaim that within ourselves we can accomplish nothing and we are just obeying Him. Disciples should not expect to have some special rewards for just doing what they have been told to do. Disciples do not obtain special merit from God for doing their duties.

Luke 17:11-14

While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. (12) As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; (13) and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (14) When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they were going, they were cleansed.

Luke continues to remind his readers that Jesus is resolutely heading toward His goal of Jerusalem (9:51; 13:33). Luke is not concerned with exact geographical locations but states that Jesus came to a village between the borders of Samaria and Galilee which is a rather broad area:



These lepers would not have been allowed to live in the village so they met Jesus before He entered the village. Their common disease caused them to forget any ethnic differences and they probably lived together to benefit each other. They raised their voices to get the attention of Jesus and did not proclaim their problems but just begged Jesus to have mercy on them as they called Him Master. Of course their hope was that He would cleanse them of this horrible disease. Jesus only told them to go and show themselves to a priest because only a priest can declare them to either be free of the disease or to still be infected with it. A priest cannot heal but is only authorized to state publically whether a person is free of leprosy or still infected. The many conditions required of a priest to study a person's condition regarding leprosy is given in chapters 13 and 14 of Leviticus. Jesus only looked at them and did not touch them or give any special healing prayer for them. He only told them to go to a priest with the implication that they would be healed on the way to him. Indeed they were healed while going to the priest.

Luke 17:15-19

Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, (16) and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine-- where are they? (18) "Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" (19) And He said to him, "Stand up and go; your faith has made you well."

We note here that only the Samaritan is said to be healed and the others are only said to be cleansed. The difference is that the cleansing is only of the external aspects of the disease whereas the healing involves the entire person. Evidently only this one person had been given eyes to see so that he could understand that God had healed him through the power of Jesus. He turned back toward Jesus, glorified God loudly and fell on his face at the feet of Jesus to give Him thanks. Since repentance is a turning away from one path of life and the following of another path, many people use the words "turned back" to signify that this person repented of his former life and turned to serve Jesus. So only the Samaritan showed the proper act of faith toward the One who worked the miracle. He did not need to go to the priest for a declaration of healing as he knew that he had been healed by God through Jesus.

Jesus answered the Samaritan by asking three questions. None of the questions were answered but they show the displeasure of Jesus that only one of the ten who had been healed showed proper gratitude. There were ten who were healed and nine of them apparently went to the priest to obtain his proclamation of their healing so that they could return to society. It seems then that the nine preferred the approval of the world to the required showing of gratitude for the miracle healing:

Psalm 30:10-12 "Hear, O LORD, and be gracious to me; O LORD, be my helper." (11) You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, (12) That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.

Jesus also refers to this Samaritan as a foreigner that is the same word that is inscribed on a temple entrance stating that such people are not allowed to enter the temple. Thus this person is healed apart from Jewish requirements and becomes a member of the family of God who will be

welcomed into eternal blessings. Jesus then told the healed Samaritan to arise and go forth to the world and tells him that his faith had made him well. Some translations state that his faith saved him and that is a good understanding for only God is the giver of faith and He will only give that faith to someone who has been given a saving relationship to God through Jesus. Jesus frequently used the same statement such as in the following:

- Luke 7:50 *And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*
- Luke 8:48 *And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."*
- Luke 18:42 *And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."*

Luke 17:20-21

Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; (21) nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

Luke now turns his attention to the coming of the kingdom of God (KOG) that will bring destruction to the world and all of its systems, but with the elect delivered into the blessings of eternity with God. The Pharisees show their spiritual blindness with their questions to Jesus about when the kingdom of God will come. They cannot understand that the KOG is present because of the presence of the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus did answer them by telling them how it is not coming. The signs He said that would not be a designation of its coming would include events seen among the stars such as comets, natural disasters such as earthquakes, and wars among the nations of the world. But there are signs that those capable of seeing can observe such as the salvation of sinners and the resultant celebrations. The same people who cannot observe the meaning behind the teaching and works of Jesus, also are not able to say "look, here it is" or "there it is" with an emphasis on the present tense of the verb. Jesus tells them that indeed the KOG is already in your midst and you cannot see it. It **IS** here! Jesus tries to direct their attention from the future to the present but they are not able to understand: *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.* (1Cor 2:14) It is present in the teaching and healing of Jesus:

- Luke 7:22-23 *And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. (23) "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."*
- Luke 11:20 *"But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."*
- Luke 8:1 *Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him,*

The KOG is then one of those mysteries that is already here and will be here. It came with the incarnation of Jesus Christ and it will come in its entirety when He comes again.

- Luke 21:31 *"So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near."*

- Luke 22:16-18 *for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (17) And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; (18) for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."*

Luke 17:22-25

And He said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. (23) "They will say to you, 'Look there! Look here!' Do not go away, and do not run after them. (24) "For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day. (25) "But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

Jesus now directs His speech to the disciples and away from the Pharisees although they are evidently still present. The days to which Jesus refers are evidently those prophesied as a time of judging such as the following:

- Isa 39:6 *'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD.*
- Jer 7:32 *"Therefore, behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no other place.*
- Jer 9:25 *"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised--*

This day will also be a time of deliverance such as He will mention concerning Noah and Lot. Jesus tells them that they will long to see that day but they will not see it for Jesus must return to the Father and stay there until the perfect timing of Him:

Acts 3:19-21 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; (20) and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, (21) whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

The suffering of the disciples will result in their intense yearning for that day. We also still wait for that day.

Because of the longing of the disciples for the second coming of Jesus, they could be easily fooled by false prophets telling them when and where He is coming. We in the twenty-first century have seen many such false predictions over the years and I am sure we will see many more such by false prophets. Jesus tells them to not pay any attention to such proclamations. Instead Jesus tells them that the time of His coming will be easy for anyone to see such as when lightning flashes across the entire sky. Jesus will not make a secret entrance but one that will be easily seen by anyone anywhere on earth. Including verse 25, there are six passion predictions by Jesus in Luke:

- Luke 9:22 *saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day."*

- Luke 9:44 *"Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."*
- Luke 12:50 *"But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"*
- Luke 13:32-33 *And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.' (33) "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem."*
- Luke 18:32-33 *"For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, (33) and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again."*

The term "this generation" refers to those who will put Jesus to death. However it does not seem that the disciples catch on to this meaning of Jesus. The disciples will continue to be persecuted by their generation as we will see in the next chapter. The oppression will continue until the Parousia as we can easily see from the last two thousand years.

Luke 17:26-27

"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: (27) they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

We know that at the time of Noah the whole world was corrupt by God's standards:

Gen 6:11-13 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. (12) God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. (13) Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth."

Although there was much evil Jesus only mentions common actions of the people. They were partying, marrying, and being given in marriage much like people do all the time. They were so concerned with the affairs of the world that they had no time for the things of God much like some of the people in a parable: *"The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. (Luke 8:14)* The number of families in the world who were devoted to God was reduced to one. The rest of the world did not listen to the message of Noah but lived a life full of the things of the world.

We can then understand that the world will continue much as it is today with little focus on the words of Jesus until He comes again with judgment much as God did in the time of Noah. Just as the people ignored the warnings of Noah, they have been ignoring the warnings of Jesus and one day He will return with judgment much as happened with the flood. This teaching does total destruction to the concept that many people have of the End Times that the church will fill the earth so that all people will be eagerly awaiting the coming of Jesus. This teaching is called *Post-millennial*. It is a belief that near the end of time the gospel will have produced a time of great peace which will last for 1000 years and then Christ will return. To have this view one must

believe that man is becoming a better person as his development proceeds. This statement of Jesus regarding the time of Noah does not allow for such an understanding of the End Times.

Luke 17:28-32

"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; (29) but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. (30) "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. (31) "On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. (32) "Remember Lot's wife.

Jesus then gives us the second example of the time of the days of the Son of Man. Similarly to what the people of Noah's time were doing, Jesus lifts up rather standard items such as drinking, buying, selling, planting, and building. We know from Scripture that there was a lot of evil in Sodom at this time but Jesus does not mention evil events but rather normal events in the lives of people. What is wrong is that the people are so occupied with the normal things of life that they forget the things of God and the judgment of eternity that will come upon them. I think the reference to Luke 8:14 given above applies here also. In our country we saw a similar sudden destruction on 9/11/2001 when the World Trade Center was destroyed. This was a normal September morning with people doing all that they normally did such as getting kids to school, checking email, etc. Nobody was expecting the sudden disaster that took many lives and changed many more lives. But even with that rather small disaster in our background, we still spend little time on the things of God but have reverted to normal behavior not expecting the total destruction that God proclaims will happen in His time.

Jesus tells His disciples that the Days of the Son of Man will be similar to both of these events. There will be no need for anyone to try to save their belongings from their house for all will be destroyed. All that can be saved are the souls of the people and, if they have not already repented, there is also no time to save them. Jesus then gives us the warning to remember Lot's wife. She was almost saved. Lot and his wife had lived in a sin city and evidently she was having second thoughts about leaving her things and worldly friends. This means she was a double minded person and we discussed in the last chapter how God hates such a person:

- Psa 119:113 *I hate those who are double-minded, But I love Your law.*
- James 1:6-8 *But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, (8) being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

God had shown her the way of salvation but, because she still loved the old way she had lived, she looked back at it in a longing fashion. By remembering Lot's wife we need to carefully look at our life now and see if there are things in our lives that we still love more than we love Jesus. None of these things are worth throwing away a possible salvation.

Luke 17:33-37

*"Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. (34) "I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left. (35) "There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left. (36) ["Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left."] (37) And answering they *said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered."*

Jesus follows the statement to remember Lot's wife with verse 33 for that applies to her situation. Anyone who tries to keep his worldly life will surely lose it forever. But whoever takes up his cross daily will preserve his life forever as also stated in the following:

Matt 16:25-27 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.

Verse 34 reflects the time when there were no separate bedrooms so there is no sexual implication involved. The next verse states that two people are working at the same place and only one will be taken. Jesus is just saying that it will be a normal night with people sleeping and working when this time of Jesus comes and some will be saved and others will be left for the destruction. Verse 36 is not in the oldest manuscripts but obviously does not contradict any other verses. Someone just wanted to amplify that men will also be working when one is taken and the other is left for destruction.

Verse 37 has given people many problems in trying to interpret it. One commentator has given twenty interpretations! At first glance, their question seems rather strange. I can't help but ask "where what?" But they are answering Jesus so they must mean either where will the people be taken or where will the bodies left remain. But there remains the question of whether Jesus is referring to the Parousia or the destruction of Jerusalem. There is an additional problem in that some translations place eagles in the sentence rather than vultures. The Greek word is *aetos* and is used in only four verses in the NT. It is always translated "eagle" when used in some translations such as the KJV:

- Matt 24:28 *For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the **eagles** be gathered together.*
- Luke 17:37 *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.*
- Rev 4:7 *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying **eagle**.*
- Rev 12:14 *And to the woman were given two wings of a great **eagle**, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

But in the NASB we see two different translations for the same Greek word:

- Matt 24:28 *"Wherever the corpse is, there the **vultures** will gather.*
- Luke 17:37 *And answering they *said to Him, "Where, Lord?" And He said to them, "Where the body is, there also the **vultures** will be gathered."*
- Rev 4:7 *The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying **eagle**.*
- Rev 12:14 *But the two wings of the great **eagle** were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*

We indeed do have a dilemma and we can understand the confusion of many scholars. At least the KJV is consistent! However we can also understand why the NASB uses vultures or eagles depending upon the context. The NASB translators assumed the body in Luke 17:37 refers to the bodies of the people left behind and so they used the word vultures. It seems that the KJV translators considered the same meaning for the bodies as those left behind but perhaps they used eagles to refer to the Roman army whose ensign was the eagle. They seem also to be referring this time period to be when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The Roman soldiers then came, seized upon the bodies, and destroyed them.

I think we can assume that the meaning of the last sentence is that the disciples asked Jesus where the bodies of those left behind would be and He said that they would be left on the battle field to be destroyed by the conquerors. However I need to ask Jesus: "When does this happen?". Is He referring to the Parousia or to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD? The Pharisees had asked when was the KOG coming and now the disciples asked where but the context of what they mean by their question is obscure. The Matthew version containing this troublesome sentence places it after the statement about Jesus coming again as lightning and the context is clearly concerning when will be the second coming of the Lord (see Matt 24:3):

Matt 24:27-28 "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. (28) "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

Some scholars think Jesus is quoting from a proverb (verse 30 below):

Job 39:27-30 "Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up And makes his nest on high? (28) "On the cliff he dwells and lodges, Upon the rocky crag, an inaccessible place. (29) "From there he spies out food; His eyes see it from afar. (30) "His young ones also suck up blood; And where the slain are, there is he."

It may be that Jesus is simply saying that just as it is impossible for the eagle or vulture to not spot carrion, the world cannot avoid seeing this second coming of the Son of Man (Parousia). It does seem that context demands Jesus is referring to His Parousia in which case this last possibility is plausible as is the possibility that He means the bodies of those left behind at the Parousia will go into total destruction forever. Another possibility is that the disciples were asking where Jesus would appear and that seems like a logical question for them to ask except that Jesus already gave the meaning of the lightening appearing all over meaning that everyone would see Him when He comes back. Some things we just cannot know with certainty!