Stories of the Master Teacher

Second Quarter

1970

Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly

Adult Division, No. 300, Second Quarter, 1970

OUTLINE OF TOPICS

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Drawings by Vance Locke

The Blessing of Daily Study

"He who by faith receives the Word is receiving the very life and character of God. Every seed brings forth fruit after its kind. . . . Receive into the soul by faith the incorruptible seed of the Word, and it will bring forth a character and a life after the similitude of the character and the life of God."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 38.

"Appreciation of the Bible grows with its study."—*Ibid.,* p. 132.

"God will make the most precious revelations to His hungering, thirsting people. They will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His Word, they find that it is spirit and life. The Word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 391.

"The neglect of the Word means starvation to the soul." —*Counsels on Sabbath School Work,* page 44.

My Pledge

As one who greatly desires to improve his knowledge of the Scriptures, I pledge myself to the careful and prayerful study of some portion of my Sabbath School lesson each day of the week.

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(signed)

Stories of the Master Teacher

SECOND QUARTER, 1970

Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher who ever lived. He was the righteous One. His character added weight to His ideas and ideals. He could say, Do as I do, as well as, Do as I tell you.

Jesus Christ presented deeper and more exalted teachings than has any other man. And most of His teachings are in parables. Some declare that parables should not be used to teach doctrines. Christ, however, used parables exclusively for this purpose.

"Parable teaching was popular, and commanded the respect and attention, not only of the Jews, but of the people of other nations. No more effective method of instruction could He have employed."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 21.

Parables are pleasant to listen to and simple to remember. "In parables and comparisons He found the best method of communicating divine truth. In simple language, using figures and illustrations drawn from the natural world, He opened spiritual truth to His hearers, and gave expression to precious principles that would have passed from their minds, and left scarcely a trace, had He not connected His words with stirring scenes of life, experience, or nature." —*Fundamentals of Christian Education,* page 236.

This quarter we are to study these stories of the Master Teacher. They have been grouped under thirteen general topics. Many other groupings have been made through the centuries. But in the arrangement selected their teachings cover the seeking love of God and the concern our Father shows for His wandering children. Man's indifference to His solicitude is clearly shown. But God believes people can change and so gives every man a chance. Satan, on the other hand, is constantly laying his booby traps for the unwary whose very nature is their worst enemy. But our Father wishes us to ask for His help at every juncture, suggesting we turn from weakness to accept His strength. The last four lessons look forward to the end of the road. Vigilance, faithfulness, and accepting His program will make the payoff pay!

And now a word about studying these lessons. You will find a text for each day, with further texts covering the area of investigation more adequately. For lack of space we did not print them out in full. Read the entire section and note each key word in the parable. The questions in the body of material in your study guide will call attention to important truths. Look the important words up in your concordance and find other Biblical references. Do the same with the writings of Ellen G. White by using the Scriptural and Topical sections of the three-volume *Index* to her writings. When you have found the meaning of each word, fill in the mosaic of truth. Always allow Inspiration to be its own interpreter. When you have done this, tell the parable in your own words. The thought questions will direct your study inward and will help you to apply Christ's teaching to your own life. This, of course, is the main purpose in studying His parables.

At the end of the week think of the titles for the week's parables and see how they all fit together and round out the picture suggested by the general caption. You will find that the last page of your study guide contains some interesting questions. Answer these, and compare your answers with the Bible.

And now may our blessed Lord, through the inspiration of His good Spirit, aid your study and clarify your mind and bless your life as you continue to study THE STORIES OF THE MASTER TEACHER.

HEAVEN'S SEARCH AND RESCUE 1

"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10.

The parables which we are studying this week were spoken by Christ to show the love of the heavenly Father in seeking the lost. They include the one lost sheep, the one lost coin, and the *two* lost sons.

The main point of the story about the lost sheep is the world view—there is only one lost planet. It knows it is lost but cannot find its way back. So the Shepherd leaves everything to find it. In the story of the lost coin the mother/bride mislays one of her treasured coins. It cannot move itself. So she retraces her steps and fulfills her responsibilities and finds it. In the third story, each boy has a will of his own. Neither appreciates his father's love or the privileges of his home. Each in his own way rebels against his father's authority. The patient, solicitious love of the father shines through in brilliant contrast with their selfishness and pride. In the parable of the door of the sheepfold Christ is seen as the only way into peace and fulfillment.

As we study these matchless stories let us seek to analyze our attitudes and modify them through Christ's grace to comply with our heavenly Father's plans for us.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **God's Seeking Love**
   Luke 15:3, 4
2. **The Ideal Shepherd**
   John 10:7-11
3. **The Lost Dowry**
   Luke 15:8, 9
4. **Death of a Prodigal**
   Luke 15:11-13
5. **Life of a Prodigal**
   Luke 15:14-16
6. **How Good Was He?**
   Luke 15:25-28

Part 1
GOD'S SEEKING LOVE
Luke 15:3, 4

"And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"

"In the company about Jesus there were shepherds, and also men who had money invested in flocks and herds, and all could appreciate His illustration."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 187.

Note the immediate circumstances for this parable as outlined in Luke 15:1, 2. The verb indicates they continually came to Jesus. Jesus identified the owner of the flock as being also the shepherd. He had a double interest—personal affection as well as personal investment. His heart was with his treasure. Did he hesitate because only 1 percent of his sheep was lost? It is as a mother who concentrates all her love and attention on her one sick child. "The shepherd goes out to search for one sheep—the very least that can be numbered. So if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one."—*Ibid.,* p. 187.

Who are the ninety-nine that need no repentance? Is there any such person since Adam's fall? Rom. 5:12. Whom does the psalmist identify as the lost sheep? Ps. 119:176. And God's saints in every age know the answer. Do you? Micah 7:18. What is Christ's warning? Ezek. 34:2-6.

Upon whom is attention focused—the shepherd who sought, or the sheep that strayed? What is meant by "the wilderness" or "the mountains"? Why do sheep stray?

THINK IT THROUGH

Christ willingly left all to seek His lost sheep. Do I appreciate what He has done for me? Am I willing to follow His example and go into the dark and cold after those who are straying around me? Do I care enough?

"By the lost sheep Christ represents not only the individual sinner but the one world that has apostatized and has been ruined by sin. The world is but an atom in the vast dominions over which God presides, yet this little fallen world—the one lost sheep—is more precious in His sight than are the ninety and nine that went not astray from the fold."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 190.

"Thank God, He has presented to our imagination no picture of a sorrowful shepherd returning without the sheep. The parable does not speak of failure but of success and joy in the recovery. Here is the divine guarantee that not even one of the straying sheep of God's fold is overlooked, not one is left unsuccored. Everyone that will submit to be ransomed, Christ will rescue from the pit of corruption and from the briers of sin."—"Ibid.," p. 188.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 186-192 (1923 ed., pages 187-193).

Part 2
THE IDEAL SHEPHERD

John 10:7-11

"Jesus said unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. . . . I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

Read also Luke 15:5-7.

"Again Jesus found access to the minds of His hearers by the pathway of their familiar associations. . . . No picture was more familiar to His hearers than this, and Christ's words linked it forever with Himself. Never could the disciples look on the shepherds tending their flocks without recalling the Saviour's lesson. They would see Christ in each faithful shepherd. They would see themselves in each helpless and dependent flock."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 476.

In the Scriptures Christ is termed the "*Great* Shepherd" (Heb. 13:20) and the "*Chief* Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4). "The Great Shepherd has undershepherds, to whom He delegates the care of His sheep and lambs."—*Gospel Workers,* page 182. He calls Himself the "*Good* Shepherd." John 10:11. "The Bible reveals Christ to us as the Good Shepherd, seeking with unwearied feet for the lost sheep."—*Counsels to Teachers,* page 261. Everyone who accepts the care of the Good Shepherd is himself to be an undershepherd. Christ told Peter to show his love by feeding His sheep and lambs. John 21:15, 17. See also *Evangelism,* page 346.

Who is the door of the fold? John 10:9; 14:6. Is it blood-marked? Ex. 12:7. Does a door keep out (shelter) or let in (protect)?

What is suggested of Christ through the characteristics of effective shepherds? Tender and careful; watchful and solicitous (Luke 15:4, 5); sacrificial and unselfish (John 10:14, 15); known by His sheep and knows them (John 10:14); prepared to help (Ps. 80:1); seeking the straying (Ps. 119:176).

What warnings to undershepherds are given in some characteristics of evil shepherds? They feed themselves (Ezek. 34: 2-6); are idol (worthless) shepherds (Zech. 11:17, margin); foolish shepherds (Zech. 11:15); hireling, fleeing ones (John 10:11-13).

THINK IT THROUGH

With such a Shepherd and fold and provisions, why would I as a sheep want to stray? Am I a shepherd or a sheep? Do I always wish to get or to give of myself?

"In this work all the angels of heaven are ready to cooperate. All the resources of heaven are at the command of those who are seeking to save the lost. Angels will help you to reach the most careless and the most hardened. And when one is brought back to God, all heaven is made glad."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 197.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 476-484.

Part 3
THE LOST DOWRY

Luke 15:8, 9

"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

In the parable of the lost sheep the creature was aware that it was lost but was helpless to do anything. The lost coin was not aware of its condition. This thought applies particularly to children, lost to Christ in our very homes. The coin is stamped with the image of the king. Compare Gen. 1:27. Does it cease to be silver though it is lost? "The lost coin represents those who are lost in trespasses and sins, but who have no sense of their condition. They are estranged from God, but they know it not. Their souls are in peril, but they are unconscious and unconcerned."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 193, 194.

The shepherd searches the wilderness, the woman her home. The woman in this story well illustrates a mother in the home as well as the maternal church. What three things does the woman do to meet her problem? She lights a candle to dispel darkness (in her environment); she carefully sweeps her house to remove all defilement (her negligence has allowed to accumulate). This is not accomplished without dust! Then she finally searches diligently. The gospel still turns things upside down! Acts 17:6. Does a coin lose itself? "Let the candle be lighted. Search the Word of God, and by its light let everything in the home be diligently examined, to see why this child is lost. Let parents search their own hearts, examine their habits and practices. Children are the heritage of the Lord, and we are answerable to Him for our management of His property." —*Ibid.,* p. 195.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I lighting the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27) and scouring my soul (Zeph. 1:12) and my home? Am I carefully sweeping away all that obstructs to find the lost? Is there a coin lost in my home? my church?

"This parable has a lesson to families. In the household there is often great carelessness concerning the souls of its members. Among their number may be one who is estranged from God; but how little anxiety is felt lest in the family relationship there be lost one of God's entrusted gifts."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 194.

"When you see those who are going down to death, you will not rest in quiet indifference and ease. The greater their sin and the deeper their misery, the more earnest and tender will be your efforts for their recovery." "Ibid.," p. 197.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 192-197 (1923 ed., pages 193-199).

Part 4
DEATH OF A PRODIGAL

Luke 15:11-13

"And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

This has been called the pearl and crown of all parables. Who is represented by the "father"? the "sons"? Are they Jews and Gentiles, Pharisees and publicans, classes of Christians in the same church? Where do you think you fit in? The first boy was young, inexperienced, and brash. Unlike the sheep and the coin, he knew what he wanted and how to get it!

What attitude toward his father did the boy show by his request? Luke 15:12. Would it have profited the father or the boy if the father had insisted that he remain at home? Compare Rom. 1:24, 26, 28. How much of the father's property would the younger of two sons inherit? The elder brother always received a "double portion," and the other sons shared the rest equally. So he would get one third.

"Not many days after" (Luke 15:13) suggests a slight delay. Do you agree with Bernard of Clairvaux that apostasy of the heart runs ahead of apostasy of the life and deed?

List some of the resources which our heavenly Father has to divide to us. Into what did the boy change his resources? Cash! To where did he journey? Do you think Augustine was right in suggesting this "far land" is forgetfulness of God? Who were his new "friends" and what "substance" did he squander? Contrast all he "gathered" in his father's house with what he "scattered" (literal Greek) in the foreign land. The son sought freedom from restraint. Did he get it?

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I value my share of my Father's home? Am I demanding my rights without earning them? Am I longing for freedom from restraint, or freedom to serve?

"Whatever the appearance may be, every life centered in self is squandered. Whoever attempts to live apart from God is wasting his substance. He is squandering the precious years, squandering the powers of mind and heart and soul, and working to make himself bankrupt for eternity. The man who separates from God that he may serve himself, is the slave of mammon. The mind that God created for the companionship of angels has become degraded to the service of that which is earthly and bestial. This is the end to which self-serving tends."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 200, 201.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 198-200 (1923 ed., pages 201-203).

Part 5
LIFE OF A PRODIGAL

Luke 15:14-16

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."

Read Luke 15:17-24.

What things in his new life were "foreign" to those of his father's home? Is it true that all who seek freedom from the Father find captivity with Satan? Rom. 6:16. What is suggested by the "mighty famine"? Read Amos 8:11-13 and Jer. 2:13. Do these texts bear upon life apart from God?

He found himself in "want." This means complete emptiness. In what ways may the life of a sinner be empty in spite of his endless round of activities? What did the boy actually do when he hired himself (literally "glued himself") to a citizen of that land? Why is he not called a citizen himself? With all his guilt and desire to rid himself of his father, why was the boy not yet a citizen of the bad land? Something in his heart evidently made him feel alien. What are "husks"? What sort of companions did the prodigal now have? Consider Christ's words in Matt. 7:6.

How do Paul's words apply to the prodigal? Rom. 7:24. What is the answer to Paul's question? Rom. 7:25; 8:1.

What did Christ mean when He observed of the prodigal that "he came to himself" before "he came to his father"? In order to come to himself he must have gone out of himself. What does this mean to you? John 6:44.

What part did the son play in his reinstatement in his father's home? Luke 15:18. The word for "hired servants" places these in the lowest category in the household. Was he able to announce all his own plans for his future to his father? Compare his confession with that in Ex. 10:16 and Ps. 51:4. Did his father have better plans? What do you understand by the "robe" (Rev. 19:8; Zech. 3:4), and the "ring" (Eph. 1:13, 14; Esther 3:10, 12) and the "shoes" of possession? Ruth 4:8; Eph. 6:15.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do I see my Father's character in this story? How does this story picture God to me? Am I delaying my complete return to my Father's home and mine?

"The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, bring out in distinct lines God's pitying love for those who are straying from Him. Although they have turned away from God, He does not leave them in their misery. He is full of kindness and tender pity toward all who are exposed to the temptations of the artful foe." —"Christ's Object Lessons," page 198.

"Arise and go to your Father. He will meet you a great way off. If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love."—"Ibid.," p. 206.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 200-207 (1923 ed., pages 203-209).

Part 6
HOW GOOD WAS HE?

Luke 15:25-28

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. . . . Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him."

Read also Luke 15:29-32.

The prodigal son had been dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-5) and was not alive to God and righteousness. To all outward appearances this elder son was a "good son." He did not share the obvious faults of his brother—filial ingratitude, greed, unconcern for others—but this incident shows up what was in his heart—pride and malignity.

He was working "in the field." What does this suggest to you? Does this quiet questioning of one of the servants indicate a suspicious character? Why should his father not have a feast when he wished? The servant read the father's heart and expressed it in the words "safe and sound." But the elder brother showed no concern for his brother's condition and experienced no joy at his return. He was coldly "angry" (Matt. 5:22) and heartless. How did the father treat him? In response, the elder son spoke of "this thy son"—not "my brother"! There was nothing in Christ's story about "harlots" (though it was true) but the "senior saint" called attention to this fact!

Was the elder brother falling into the sin of the younger man in demanding "his portion" of his father's goods? He did not identify with his father's joys. In what sense was he also "dead"? Why did not the father strongly rebuke the elder son? Like others of the Master Teacher's stories, the end of this one is not given. It is still being enacted. It rests with each one to see what the outcome is. This other son's part in this parable points out to us the danger of self-righteousness and of harboring a cold, critical spirit. What is the only way to counteract this? Isa. 58:6, 7. What is included in "all that I have is thine"?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I a "sour saint" wanting to put his father straight? The older brother was right; yet how wrong he was in proving his righteousness. He never left home, but he was lost! Did Christ focus attention on the father or on his sons? What is the significance for me in this? Am I to all outward appearances a law-abiding Christian, while inwardly I harbor a cold, critical self-righteousness that is an offense to God? Am I guilty of playing the part of the "older brother"? Do I go off in a huff? Why did Christ end with, "He would not go in"?

"By the elder son were represented the unrepenting Jews of Christ's day, and also the Pharisees in every age, who look with contempt upon those whom they regard as publicans and sinners. . . .

"In the parable the father's remonstrance with the elder son was Heaven's tender appeal to the Pharisees."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 209.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 207-211 (1923 ed., pages 209-213).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Name the "lost things" this lesson deals with.

_____ _____

_____ _____

2. What is represented by each?

_____ _____

_____ _____

3. What is suggested by the three who seek the lost?

_____

4. What takes place when each of the lost is found? _____

5. Finish these words that tell what the father did for the returning son:

We_____ him; c_____ him; f_____ him; re_____ over him.

6. Check the ones that are correct: The older son was (*a*) lacking in love and concern; (*b*) faithful to his father; (*c*) self-righteous.

ANSWERS:

1. The sheep, the coin, the younger son, the older son. 2. (a) The one who is lost but can't find his way back, the lost world; (b) the one who does not know he is lost and does not know his way, the child in the home; (c) the one who knows he is lost and knows his way home; (d) the one who thinks he is all right but is lost. 3. (a) The shepherd is Christ; (b) the woman is the church; (c) the heavenly Father. 4. Rejoicing. 5. Welcomed, clothed, fed, rejoiced. 6. a, c.

MY GOD IS CONCERNED 2

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7.

In these fast-moving, materialistic days, men rush to grasp immediate rewards and quick profits. Many times they remain unsatisfied with their prizes. Christ was well aware of man's basic needs. In the parable of the treasure trove the prize was discovered almost by accident. Certainly there was no prior realization of what lay concealed under the sod. But the treasure had already been hidden there. It was treasure whether the finder realized it or not.

In the story about the pearl the merchant deliberately and methodically set out to find the superior pearl. When he had discovered it, he exchanged all he had for it. He was very deeply concerned for what he regarded as of supreme value.

In the episodes of the wise men at Christ's birth and of the Greeks immediately before His crucifixion, man's quest for the Saviour is epitomized. We find when we seek. These basic truths, that God has supplied all we need, and that if we seriously and continuously search we shall find, are painted by Christ in bird plumes and lily fragrance.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Treasure Trove**
   Matt. 13:44
2. **Pearls—Sought and Bought**
   Matt. 13:45
3. **Bargain Hunter**
   Matt. 13:46
4. **Vision Glorious**
   John 12:20-22
5. **Dying to Live**
   John 12:24, 25
6. **Look Around and Learn**
   Matt. 6:26-29

Part 1
TREASURE TROVE

Matt. 13:44

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

In this parable, spoken to those in "the house" (Matt. 13:36), Jesus referred to the ancient custom of hiding treasure for safety. Treasure is the center of this story. Whenever danger threatened by invasion, by hordes of robbers, or by the government tax gatherers demanding illegal amounts in tribute money, those who had possessions hid them till times were better. Burying them in the earth was a common practice. On occasion the treasure was abandoned either because the owner had been killed or because he had forgotten where he hid it. It was not uncommon for a man plowing in a field to unearth jewelry or coins.

In Christ's parable of the treasure, who do you think hid it? What was an occupation of some in olden times? Job 3:21; Prov. 2:4. It was while he was about his daily tasks that the farmer came upon the treasure. This was a result of his personal effort. Was he actually looking for it? Contrast this attitude with the man who deliberately set out to find good pearls. How do these two men illustrate characters on their way to heaven?

"A man might pass over the place where treasure had been concealed. In dire necessity he might sit down to rest at the foot of a tree, not knowing of the riches hidden at its roots. So it was with the Jews. As a golden treasure, truth had been entrusted to the Hebrew people. The Jewish economy, bearing the signature of Heaven, had been instituted by Christ Himself. In types and symbols the great truths of redemption were veiled. Yet when Christ came, the Jews did not recognize Him to whom these symbols pointed. . . . The spiritual import of the sacred writings was lost. The treasure house of all knowledge was open to them, but they knew it not."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 104, 105.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I really searching for true treasure? Or am I content with what is actually tinsel? How diligently am I plowing the Scripture fields?

"This parable illustrates the value of the heavenly treasure, and the effort that should be made to secure it. The finder of the treasure in the field was ready to part with all that he had, ready to put forth untiring labor, in order to secure the hidden riches. So the finder of heavenly treasure will count no labor too great and no sacrifice too dear, in order to gain the treasures of truth."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 104.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 103-114 (1923 ed., pages 101-113).

Part 2
PEARLS—SOUGHT AND BOUGHT
Matt. 13:45

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls."

In the previous parable the kingdom of heaven is like treasure. Here it is like a merchant seeking. What is the difference? With deliberate intent Christ has set side by side the *finders* and the *seekers*. This parable has a double meaning. It represents those who seek the kingdom of heaven, but it also applies to Christ who seeks for His lost inheritance. Why did Christ call the man a "merchantman"? He "represents a class who were sincerely desiring truth."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 116.

The term "merchantman" means one who travels around and buys. His search shows resolution, planning, and appropriate direction. "Christ, the heavenly merchantman seeking goodly pearls, saw in lost humanity the pearl of price. In man, defiled and ruined by sin, He saw the possibilities of redemption. Hearts that have been the battleground of the conflict with Satan, and that have been rescued by the power of love, are more precious to the Redeemer than are those who have never fallen. God looked upon humanity, not as vile and worthless; He looked upon it in Christ, saw it as it might become through redeeming love. He collected all the riches of the universe, and laid them down in order to buy the pearl. And Jesus, having found it, resets it in His own diadem. 'For they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land.' Zech. 9:16."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 118.

How will Christ regard those who give up all to obtain the pearl of great price? Mal. 3:17. What did Mary find? Luke 10:41, 42.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I consistently seek only those things that are of eternal value—the goodly pearls of life? By what attitude may I turn from the pearls Christ places before us? Matt. 7:6. What do I see of Christ's quest in this parable?

"We are to seek for the pearl of great price, but not in worldly marts or in worldly ways. The price we are required to pay is not gold or silver, for this belongs to God. Abandon the idea that temporal or spiritual advantages will win for you salvation. God calls for your willing obedience. He asks you to give up your sins. 'To him that overcometh,' Christ declares, 'will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.' Rev. 3:21."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 117.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 115-117 (1923 ed., same).

Part 3
BARGAIN HUNTER
Matt. 13:46

"Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

Read Col. 2:3.

As he went from market to market, the merchantman kept his eyes open for an exceptional pearl. At last he found just what he had long been searching for—a lustrous, beautiful pearl of great value. He longed to have it for himself, but he did not immediately have the money it would take to purchase it. What do you understand is involved in his "selling his all" to obtain it? Compare Isa. 55:1; Matt. 25:9, 10; Rev. 3:18; Prov. 23:23. How do we indicate our eagerness to possess the Pearl? Does Christ's parable apply to us? Matt. 6:21. What is the measure of the value of the salvation Christ offers us? I Peter 1:18, 19.

"All that can satisfy the needs and longings of the human soul, for this world and for the world to come, is found in Christ. Our Redeemer is the pearl so precious that in comparison all things else may be accounted loss."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 115.

Of what are the gates of the New Jerusalem made? Rev. 21:21. What is suggested by the history of a pearl? The pearl is the product of an injury or irritation to the living oyster. By the defense mechanism of the mollusk the irritant becomes the nucleus of a pearl as it is encrusted by layer upon layer of nacre. Thus the injury is turned into a precious jewel. It was only through injury inflicted on the Pearl of great price, our Lord Himself, that we can obtain an entrance to the heavenly city.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I appreciate the Pearl of great price enough and value the suffering He endured to provide for my entrance into the city of life? How much am I prepared to exchange for this eternal reward?

"There are some who seem to be always seeking for the heavenly pearl. But they do not make an entire surrender of their wrong habits. They do not die to self that Christ may live in them. Therefore they do not find the precious pearl. They have not overcome unholy ambition and their love for worldly attractions. They do not take up the cross and follow Christ in the path of self-denial and sacrifice. Almost Christians, yet not fully Christians, they seem neor the kingdom of heaven, but they connot enter there. Almost but not wholly saved, means to be not almost but wholly lost."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 118.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 117-121 (1923 ed., same).

Part 4
VISION GLORIOUS
John 12:20-22

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus."
Read also Matt. 2:1, 2.

Through all ages and in every land thinking men have been seeking for the Pearl of great price without realizing exactly what they wanted. Centuries ago Augustine put this longing into beautiful language: "O Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it find rest in Thee." At the beginning of our Saviour's life on earth "wise men" came from the "east" seeking Him. Matt. 2:1. Just before the end of His earthly sojourn Greeks came from the "west." What was their request? John 12:21. What kind of men are represented by these two groups? Do you think that these two incidents are a representation of man's response to the plan of salvation? What did Jesus mean by His response? John 12:23.

"When Christ heard the eager request, 'We would see Jesus,' echoing the hungering cry of the world, His countenance lighted up, and He said, 'The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.' In the request of the Greeks He saw an earnest of the results of His great sacrifice."—*The Desire of Ages,* page 621.

THINK IT THROUGH

How far had these two groups come to seek Christ? Am I as eager in my search for Christ the Pearl of great price as were the wise men from the east or the Greeks from the west? What characteristics do I possess in common with these men? Are my motivations similar to theirs?

"These men came from the west to find the Saviour at the close of His life, as the wise men had come from the east at the beginning. At the time of Christ's birth the Jewish people were so engrossed with their own ambitious plans that they knew not of His advent. The magi from a heathen land came to the manger with their gifts, to worship the Saviour. So these Greeks, representing the nations, tribes, and people of the world, came to see Jesus. So the people of all lands and all ages would be drawn by the Saviour's cross. So shall many 'come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.' Matt. 8:11."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 621, 622.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 621, 622.

Part 5
DYING TO LIVE

John 12:24, 25

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

This parable given at the time of the Greeks' inquiry, has a double meaning. It refers to Christ's dying to obtain our redemption. It also refers to His disciples, who must die to self before they can live for Christ. Does what Jesus meant in Matt. 16:24 apply to you? Who is represented by the "corn of wheat"? When does it fall? What causes its death? The botanist observes that a potato rots in the soil before the new crop is produced. What does this mean in your life? Rom. 7:9, 10. Is there significance to the "ground" where it is buried?

"The life must be cast into the furrow of the world's need. Self-love, self-interest, must perish. But the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The seed buried in the ground produces fruit, and in turn this is planted. Thus the harvest is multiplied. The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So in human life, to give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. Those who for Christ's sake sacrifice their life in this world, will keep it unto life eternal."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 86, 87.

What do you understand by "the furrow of the world's need"? What does Christ mean by saying we should hate our lives? How may we keep our lives unto eternal life? What is the death to which Christ refers? Read Paul's point of view in Phil. 1:21; Gal. 2:20, 21.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I willing to be cast like the seed into the soil to die to self before I can live for Christ? Was it easy for our Saviour to cast Himself into this world's furrow?

"The seed dies to spring forth into new life, and in this we are taught the lesson of the resurrection. All who love God will live again in the Eden above. Of the human body laid away to molder in the grave God has said, 'It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.' 1 Cor. 15:42, 43." —"Christ's Object Lessons," page 87.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 86, 87 (1923 ed., pages 88, 89).

Part 6
LOOK AROUND AND LEARN

Matt. 6:26-29

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Read also Job 38:41.

God feeds every creature. He spreads a table for the birds everywhere. What means does He use to do this? Why does He not put the food in their nests? The birds must do their part by searching for the food that is all around them. In the same way God provides for us. What must we do for our part? Isa. 55:1, 2. Do you truly believe that since God takes care of the sparrow, He will take care of you?

God clothes the lilies of the field in rainbow beauty. He supplies the sun and rain and the nutrients of the soil to promote their growth. They press their roots into the ground to take up needed nourishment. They obey the laws of the universe.

"God's law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing,* page 97.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I take time to allow the beautiful things of nature to speak their silent messages to my heart and bring it peace?

"In the loveliness of the things of nature you may learn more of the wisdom of God than the schoolmen know. On the lily's petals, God has written a message for you, written in language that your heart can read only as it unlearns the lessons of distrust and selfishness and corroding care. Why has He given you the singing birds and the gentle blossoms, but from the overflowing love of a Father's heart, that would brighten and gladden your path of life? All that was needed for existence would have been yours without the flowers and birds, but God was not content to provide what would suffice for mere existence. He has filled earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you. The beauty of all created things is but a gleam from the shining of His glory. If He has lavished such infinite skill upon the things of nature, for your happiness and joy, can you doubt that He will give you every needed blessing?"—"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 96, 97.

For deeper study: "Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 95-98 (1943 ed., pages 141-146).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Complete this sentence: The one who wishes to possess the heavenly treasure must be willing to _____.

2. True or False? The merchantman represents those who sincerely desire the truth. _____

3. Delete the names that do not apply: Peter, James, Paul said that we are not redeemed with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ.

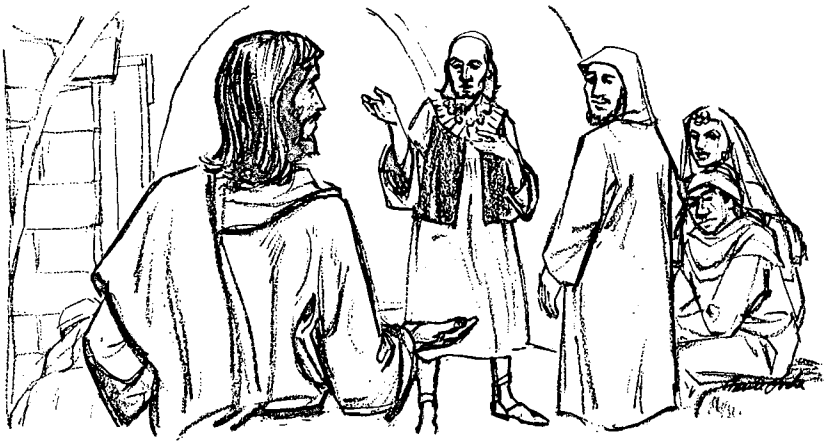
4. Who came from the east during the lifetime of Jesus to seek Him as the true treasure and Pearl of great price, and who came from the west? _____

5. What brief parable preceded these words of Christ: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"? _____

6. Name two object lessons from nature which Christ used in order to illustrate the lesson of trust. _____ _____

ANSWERS:

1. Give up everything to obtain it. 2. True. 3. Delete "James" and "Paul." 4. The wise men, the Greeks. 5. The grain of wheat falling into the earth. 6. The fowls of the air, the lilies of the field.



IS IT NOTHING TO THEE? 3

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke 10:27.

This is an age in which everyone minds his own business. We often read of innocent persons being robbed or beaten in full view of several indifferent and curious bystanders who do nothing whatever to help. We hear over the news of large populations of our fellow human beings in dire need, of thousands dying of starvation, and we shrug it off and do nothing. We read of accidents by land and sea and air, of tragedies almost next door, and hardly give them a second passing thought. The characteristic of a large segment of our society is to shrug off all personal involvement with an offhand, "So what?" Our Lord has a message to correct this attitude and to indicate areas in which His followers should be vitally concerned.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Earning Merit Points With God**
   Luke 10:25-27
2. **Why Worry About Him?**
   Luke 10:28, 29
3. **Should I Get Involved?**
   Luke 10:30-32
4. **Love Power**
   Luke 10:33-37
5. **Who Cares Enough?**
   Luke 12:42-44
6. **Something New, Something Old**
   Matt. 13:52

Part 1
EARNING MERIT POINTS WITH GOD

Luke 10:25-27

"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

Was the lawyer genuinely worried about what he should "do"? What is meant by "tempting Him"? Compare Matt. 22:35. Tempting means testing and may not have bad connotations. James 1:13; Gen. 22:1. Most of us would rather "do" than "be." But can we sinful persons become right before God by what we do? Rom. 3:12, 20. The lawyer wondered whether he could "inherit."

How only does one become an heir? John 3:3, 5. Inheritance is thus the *natural* result of being. How may we become "heirs" of God? Gal. 3:29. Does it ever follow that eternal life comes naturally on the heels of "doing"? Rom. 6:23.

Jesus in His reply to the lawyer asked two questions—"What is written in the law?" and "How readest thou?" What did He mean? How may *we* read what we want into the Bible? Would you apply Christ's questions to our situation today? What passages did the lawyer readily quote? Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.

"The words of Deut. 6:5 were recited by every devout Jew morning and evening as a part of the *shema'* . . . , and were worn also in the phylacteries. . . . Jews who had an insight into the inner meaning of 'the law' . . . should have realized that its principles were not arbitrary but based on fundamental principles of right which might properly be summed up in the command 'to love.' "—*SDA Bible Commentary,* on Luke 10:27.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I interested merely in getting so much of the Bible read daily, or am I seeking divine insights for my own spiritual growth and for the help of others? Am I more interested in "being" a disciple of Christ than in "doing" deeds to earn merit points with man and God? How do I demonstrate what I am? See James 3.

"The lawyer was not satisfied with the position and works of the Pharisees. He had been studying the Scriptures with a desire to learn their real meaning. He had a vital interest in the matter, and had asked in sincerity, 'What shall I do?' In his answer as to the requirements of the law, he passed by all the mass of ceremonial and ritualistic precepts. For these he claimed no value, but presented the two great principles on which hang all the law and the prophets. This answer, being commended by Christ, placed the Saviour on vantage ground with the rabbis. They could not condemn Him for sanctioning that which had been advanced by an expositor of the law."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 497, 498.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 376-378 (1923 ed., pages 381, 382); "The Desire of Ages," pages 497, 498.

Part 2
WHY WORRY ABOUT HIM?
Luke 10:28, 29

"And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?"

The lawyer's reply to Christ's question about what was written in the law was right. Love is the answer—love to God and toward our fellowmen. Figure out how this applies to each command of God. Christ commended him for his good response, and said, "This do, and thou shalt live." What are "works" in God's sight? John 6:29. Our *doing* consists in loving. Has loving to do with "being" or "doing"? But the lawyer felt threatened by Christ's question. The Teacher before him was aware of the secrets in his life.

"The lawyer knew that he had kept neither the first four nor the last six commandments. He was convicted under Christ's searching words, but instead of confessing his sin he tried to excuse it. Rather than acknowledge the truth, he endeavored to show how difficult of fulfillment the commandment is. Thus he hoped both to parry conviction and to vindicate himself in the eyes of the people. The Saviour's words had shown that his question was needless, since he was able to answer it himself. Yet he put another question, saying, 'Who is my neighbor?' " —*Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 378, 379.

He wanted to draw Christ into a controversy by this question, for it was heatedly disputed among the Jews. This would distract attention from his personal religion by irrelevant dialogue. He wanted an argument to confirm his own ideas, which limited the circle of those about whom he felt he should worry. But to whom is every true Christian in debt? Rom. 13:8.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I ever try to evade vital issues by sidetracking the discussion into theoretical arguments? Am I really honest with myself and others in all my speaking and doing and believing? What does self-justification reveal in my character?

"Among the Jews the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' caused endless dispute. They had no doubt as to the heathen and the Samaritans. These were strangers and enemies. But where should the distinction be made among the people of their own nation and among the different classes of society? Whom should the priest, the rabbi, the elder, regard as neighbor? They spent their lives in a round of ceremonies to make themselves pure. Contact with the ignorant and careless multitude, they taught, would cause defilement that would require wearisome effort to remove. Were they to regard the 'unclean' as neighbors?"—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 376.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," page 498; "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 378, 379 (1923 ed., page 383).

Part 3
SHOULD I GET INVOLVED?

Luke 10:30-32

"And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side."

Jesus was relating what had recently occurred. The details were fresh in the memories of his hearers. Compare what the bandits did with Satan's work against mankind in Eden—"stripped" them (Gen. 3:7)—left them "half dead" (Gen. 2:17). Who is the arch robber? John 8:44.

" 'Down' is the correct word to describe the descent from Jerusalem, more than 2,500 ft. above sea level, to Jericho, about 700 ft. below sea level. The main road from Jerusalem to Jericho follows the *Wâdi Qelt* down through a portion of the dry, barren, uninhabited hills of the wilderness of Judah. [Cf. Deut. 34:3; Josh. 16:1.] At one point the *Wâdi Qelt* narrows into a rocky defile that from time immemorial has been the haunt of robbers. The entire region, with its many caves and rocks, provides a perfect hideout for outlaws."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, on Luke 10:30.

What instruction had God given His people concerning the treatment of strangers? Lev. 19:34. What lies behind the words "by chance" or "by coincidence"? The priest at a glance took in what had happened and passed by on the other side. The Levite at least went and looked at the victim! But he, too, passed by on the other side. From their reactions, what do you discover about the characters of the two religious officials? Did they obey God's law? Deut. 22:4; Ex. 23:5. A man is more important than a beast. Compare Isa. 58:7.

What principles do you find in the story which are applicable to our conditions today?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I afraid to share another's problems, or am I ready to try to help all I can wherever the opportunity is brought to my notice? What are my motives when confronted with basic human needs?

"The angels of heaven look upon the distress of God's family upon the earth, and they are prepared to cooperate with men in relieving oppression and suffering. God in His providence had brought the priest and the Levite along the road where the wounded sufferer lay, that they might see his need of mercy and help. All heaven watched to see if the hearts of these men would be touched with pity for human woe. The Saviour was the One who had instructed the Hebrews in the wilderness; from the pillar of cloud and of fire He had taught a very different lesson from that which the people were now receiving from their priests and teachers. The merciful provisions of the law extended even to the lower animals, which cannot express in words their want and suffering."—"The Desire of Ages," page 500.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," page 379 (1923 ed., pages 383, 384); "The Desire of Ages," pages 499, 500.

Part 4
LOVE POWER

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise."

Luke 10:33-37

Who were the Samaritans? Jesus called a Samaritan a "stranger." Luke 17:18. For an understanding of the conditions during which their hositility with the Jews first developed, read Josephus, *Antiquities* 9:14:3; 11:8:6; and *SDA Bible Dictionary*, art. "Samaritans."

The Samaritan in Christ's story went to where the unfortunate man was lying. Should we ever wait for the needy to come to us for help? There is no substitute for personal contacts. The Samaritan acted immediately—"when he saw him." Our help must be timely.

He "had compassion." Are our acts of mercy accompanied by a feeling of genuine sympathy for those we help? Or are we patronizing and activated by baser motives? His service to the victim of brutality was personal. He might have argued that he lacked equipment, but instead he did what he could. He poured in wine to cleanse and oil (Isa. 1:6) to soothe. He ministered to the man's needs with his own hands and from his own supplies, using his own beast (cf. 2 Chron. 28:15) to transport the victim to a place of safety and comfort.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does Jesus always have some deficiency in our service to make up? Is one who needs love or one who shows love a neighbor? Did the lawyer get the point of the story? The lawyer inquired, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "To whom should I be neighborly?" List opportunities which you think are parallel today for us to show the power of love in our lives.

"This Samaritan represents Christ. Our Saviour manifested for us a love that the love of man can never equal. When we were bruised and dying, He had pity upon us. He did not pass us by on the other side, and leave us, helpless and hopeless, to perish. He did not remain in His holy, happy home, where He was beloved by all the heavenly host. He beheld our sore need, He undertook our case, and identified His interests with those of humanity. He died to save His enemies. He prayed for His murderers. Pointing to His own example, He says to His followers, 'These things I command you, that ye love one another'; 'as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' John 15:17; 13:34."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 381, 382.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 379, 380 (1923 ed., pages 384, 385); "The Desire of Ages," page 503.

Part 5
WHO CARES ENOUGH?

Luke 12:42-44

"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath."

To what time "when he [his lord] cometh" does this parable apply? What factors lead you personally to conclude that we are living in the "time" Christ had in mind? What should all "good stewards" be doing? Whom do they represent? What did Jesus mean by giving "meat in due season"? Why? Who laid this duty on the steward? What is the "meat"? What did Jesus indicate constituted the most important "diet" for His disciples? John 6:53-58, 63.

How should those who are waiting for the second advent of Christ be spending their time? What happens to the servant who is *not* faithful in his watching? Luke 12:45-48. Over what is Jesus going to set the faithful as rulers? Matt. 19:28. What is suggested by the words "his heart"? Prov. 4:23. In what ways did the servant "beat" his fellows? Isa. 58:4. With what may the unwary become drunk? Rev. 17:2. Upon what basis did Jesus say the sentences in the judgment will be handed out?

THINK IT THROUGH

When did I last give a Bible study? What do I consider is "present truth"? Do I ever think, without actually saying it out loud, that my Lord is delaying His coming? Am I tempted to become more and more absorbed in the things of the world instead of studying to give others "meat in due season"? How may I prepare for my Lord's coming? Be specific.

" 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' Luke 12:48. We shall individually be held responsible for doing one jot less than we have ability to do. The Lord measures with exactness every possibility for service. The unused capabilities are as much brought into account as are those that are improved. For all that we might become through the right use of our talents God holds us responsible. We shall be judged according to what we ought to have done, but did not accomplish because we did not use our powers to glorify God. Even if we do not lose our souls, we shall realize in eternity the result of our unused talents. For all the knowledge and ability that we might have gained and did not, there will be an eternal loss."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 362, 363.

For deeper study: "SDA Bible Commentary," on Luke 12:42-48.

Part 6
SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING OLD
Matt. 13:52

"Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

Who is represented by the "scribe"? What does Jesus mean by "the kingdom of heaven"? Have I accepted the instruction God gives? What are the treasures "new and old"? Why are they termed "treasures"? What makes some of them "new" and others "old"? "The Word of God includes the Scriptures of the Old Testament as well as of the New. One is not complete without the other. Christ declared that the truths of the Old Testament are as valuable as those of the New. Christ was as much man's Redeemer in the beginning of the world as He is today."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 126.

Christ often presented old truths to His hearers, but He shed on them a new light. He did this by placing them in the setting of the people's needs. So His representatives are to teach the age-old truths—the old treasures—but make them sparkle with new light and close personal relevance. Am I a faithful "scribe" or "householder"? Should I be appealing to my family or close associates as did the jailer at Philippi? Acts 16:30-33.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is my main concern for others, bruised and wounded and dying, to share my spiritual birthright? Are there any members of my "house" whom I am neglecting? Am I instructing others in the way of life? Do I study to bring a freshness and vitality into the old truths of the Word? Do I strive for originality or the finding of "new light"? Actually, is the Bible really vivid and timely in my own life?

"The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Both present truths that will continually reveal new depths of meaning to the earnest seeker."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 128.

"The great storehouse of truth is the word of God—the written word, the book of nature, and the book of experience in God's dealing with human life. Here are the treasures from which Christ's workers are to draw. In the search after truth they are to depend upon God, not upon human intelligences, the great men whose wisdom is foolishness with God. Through His own appointed channels the Lord will impart a knowledge of Himself to every seeker."—"Ibid.," p. 125.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 124-134 (1923 ed., pages 125-135).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. What two questions did Christ ask the lawyer who asked Him, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life"? _____

2. What sidetracking question did the lawyer ask Jesus? _____

3. Which of the two travelers on the Jericho road went and looked and passed by; which merely passed by? _____ _____

4. Name five things the Samaritan did for the wounded man. _____

_____ _____ _____

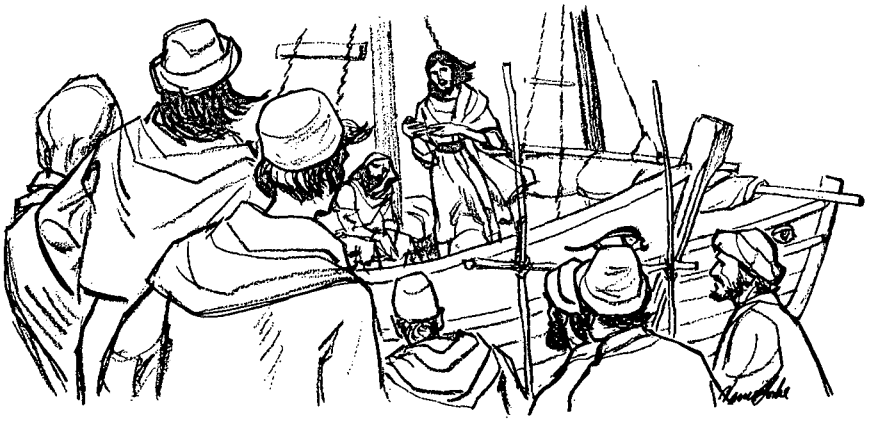
_____

5. Fill in the blanks: A faithful servant is one who uses his capabilities to _____ the _____ of life.

6. True or False? "Things new and old" in the parable refer to the truths of the New and Old Testaments. _____

ANSWERS:

1. "What is written in the law?" and "How readest thou?" 2. "Who is my neighbor?" 3. The Levite, the priest. 4. Had compassion on him, rendered him first aid, provided transportation for him, nursed him, provided financially for him. 5. Feed, word. 6. True.



PEOPLE CAN CHANGE 4

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." Luke 2:52.

There are many problems in life that often make it difficult for us to bring our plans to maturity. In agriculture, for example, pests devour the seed before it has time to germinate. Animals seek to eat the young shoots. Fungi and other destructive diseases devastate the fruit. The question naturally arises, Can a bountiful harvest ever be gathered? The same question may well be asked of conditions in "the kingdom of God." Will the Great Harvester ever be able to gather a bountiful crop of souls from the seed He has sown? The enemies of God's government constantly employ every means to thwart the divine purposes. Through thousands of years Satan has manipulated the environment and debased the human stock until it almost seems that nothing can be done to transform lives. But people can change! The power that created can recreate.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Size Does Not Matter**
   Matt. 13:31, 32
2. **Power From Within**
   Luke 13:20, 21
3. **What Counts Is Growth**
   Mark 4:26, 27
4. **The Lavish Sower**
   Matt. 13:2, 3
5. **Of Seeds and Soils**
   Luke 8:5-7
6. **Fertile Soil**
   Luke 8:8, 15

Part 1
SIZE DOES NOT MATTER

Matt. 13:31, 32

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

As in other parables the "man" refers first to our Lord Jesus Christ and secondarily to human beings. "Sowing" suggests scattering seed to gain a harvest. Christ sows, man sows. This act is used with a larger meaning than it has in the precision of gardening. The seed is cast forth far and wide. What universal law governs the sowing of the seed and the reaping of the harvest? Gal. 6:7. How would you apply this to your business ventures, your social contacts, and your missionary activities?

Among the Jews the mustard seed was proverbial for smallness (Luke 17:6), as it is among the Arabs (Koran, sura 31). Christ uses the mustard plant because of its tiny seed and ultimately large size. Its small seed might lead the thoughtless to consider it powerless. It is not the beginning but the ending that counts. The mustard seed possesses mighty potential to multiply its size many times, becoming the "greatest among herbs." It works extensively and visibly and outwardly.

THINK IT THROUGH

In what way does the truth taught by the parable of the mustard seed apply to each human heart and also to the growth of the Christian church in the world? Am I tempted to think that size of beginning is important? If the seed can change into a tree, can "faith as a grain of mustard seed" remove my difficulties and help my transformation?

"At first it [the mustard seed] sent up a tender shoot, but it was of strong vitality, and grew and flourished until it reached its present great size. So the kingdom of Christ in its beginning seemed humble and insignificant. Compared with earthly kingdoms it appeared to be the least of all. By the rulers of this world Christ's claim to be a king was ridiculed. Yet in the mighty truths committed to His followers the kingdom of the gospel possessed a divine life. And how rapid was its growth, how widespread its influence! When Christ spoke this parable, there were only a few Galilean peasants to represent the new kingdom. Their poverty, the fewness of their numbers, were urged over and over again as a reason why men should not connect themselves with these simple-minded fishermen who followed Jesus. But the mustard seed was to grow and spread forth its branches throughout the world. When the earthly kingdoms whose glory then filled the hearts of men should perish, the kingdom of Christ would remain, a mighty and far-reaching power."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 77, 78.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 76-79 (1923 ed., pages 75-79).

Part 2
POWER FROM WITHIN
Luke 13:20, 21

"And again He said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

Read also 1 Cor. 5:6, 7.

Leaven works silently and unobtrusively. Unlike the mustard seed, it works intensively from within, and its processes are not seen by anyone. Leaven thus represents hidden principles that alter our nature, our thinking, and our entire life. In the Scriptures leaven may stand for both good and evil influences. Christ gave His disciples warnings against three insidious contacts. They should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. What was this? Luke 12:1.

What bearing may the leaven of the Sadducees have on our lives? Matt. 16:11, 12. What did the Sadducees deny? This philosophy would lead to certain negative attitudes. Can you list some results in your life that might spring from this leaven? Acts 23:8. The leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15) reflected that politic Edomite's attitude to life. What were characteristics of Esau-Edom? Can we develop this philosophy today?

"As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 97.

For the leaven to work, it must be kneaded into the dough. As with the woman and the lost silver coin, this woman's ministry is the quiet work in the home, of putting into the pliable minds of her little ones the transforming principles of the kingdom of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

Which kind of leaven am I choosing to place in my life? Do I trust the transforming power of the invisible grace of God in my life? Am I worried about how my children are going to develop without making certain that the true leaven is kneaded in?

"In the Saviour's parable, leaven is used to represent the kingdom of heaven. It illustrates the quickening, assimilating power of the grace of God." "The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 96, 98, 99.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 95-102 (1923 ed., pages 93-99).

Part 3
WHAT COUNTS IS GROWTH
Mark 4:26, 27

"And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how."

In this parable (unique in Mark) Jesus stresses the truth that the man who sows the seed may not know the processes by which it develops. Who is the "man," ignorant of the power of growth and indifferent to the development of the seed? Is he the same as the Harvester at the end of the story—Jesus? Is Christ trying to show that there are things that He does not know or is not overly concerned with, trusting all to His heavenly Father?

While the farmer goes about his other necessary daily activities, the seed he has sown fulfills its function. He can do little about it; "the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself" ("herself" in Mark 4:28 is from the Greek root for "automatic"). This is a comforting thought both for our own growth and for our confidence in the mental and spiritual development of those for whom we work. God has designed that the soil shall change the seed. The missionaries, the teachers, the parents, who implant the seed of righteousness in the fertile soil of the minds of those with whom they have to do can take both courage and warning from this.

This parable also has a personal message for us as individual disciples. Christ's responsibility is at the beginning, to sow seed; and at the end, to reap the harvest. In between the soil causes change. We accept the seed of the Word into our own souls. With our eyes fixed on the Ideal, we may sometimes wonder whether we shall ever be able to grow like Him. This parable of the silent seed assures us that the transforming Word will carry out God's design in our lives so long as we let it do its natural work.

THINK IT THROUGH

After I have accepted the right principles of the kingdom, do I worry unnecessarily about every little detail of my spiritual progress, or do I leave it, as the husbandman leaves the implanted seed, to develop under the Spirit's care? See 1 Peter 5:7.

"The parable of the seed reveals that God is at work in nature. The seed has in itself a germinating principle, a principle that God Himself has implanted; yet if left to itself the seed would have no power to spring up. Man has his part to act in promoting the growth of the grain. He must prepare and enrich the soil and cast in the seed. He must till the fields. But there is a point beyond which he can accomplish nothing. No strength or wisdom of man can bring forth from the seed the living plant. Let man put forth his efforts to the utmost limit, he must still depend upon One who has connected the sowing and the reaping by wonderful links of His own omnipotent power."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 63.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 62-69 (1923 ed., pages 61-67); "Education," pages 104-106.

Part 4
THE LAVISH SOWER

Matt. 13:2, 3

"And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

The sower left his home to do his work. What did Jesus leave to come to the world—"the field"—to cast abroad the seeds of truth? Christ's expression does not indicate that the sower put delicate plants one by one in a hothouse, but that He cast abroad the seed so as to cover every spot. This truth of generous sowing is emphasized in the Scriptures. See 2 Cor. 9:6; Prov. 11:24-26. To whom are the illuminating principles of the Word to be given? John 1:9.

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." Rom. 11:32. The Husbandman scatters the gospel seed across all the areas of the field, that is, the world. The sower may also represent the evangelist. The "sower" is representative of all who scatter the seed of truth so as to leave no part of the field unworked.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I doing my work as a sower in the portion of the field in which Christ has placed me? Does Paul have anything to say to me in Gal. 6:7, 8?

"Christ had come, not as a king, but as a sower; not for the overthrow of kingdoms, but for the scattering of seed; not to point His followers to earthly triumphs and national greatness, but to a harvest to be gathered after patient toil and through losses and disappointments."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 35.

" 'The sower went forth to sow' (R.V.). In the East the state of affairs was so unsettled, and there was so great danger from violence that the people dwelt chiefly in walled towns, and the husbandmen went forth daily to their labor outside the walls. So Christ, the heavenly Sower, went forth to sow. He left His home of security and peace, left the glory that He had with the Father before the world was, left His position upon the throne of the universe. He went forth, a suffering, tempted man; went forth in solitude, to sow in tears, to water with His blood, the seed of life for a world lost.

"His servants in like manner must go forth to sow. . . . Those who are called to unite with Christ must leave all, in order to follow Him. Old associations must be broken up, plans of life relinquished, earthly hopes surrendered. In toil and tears, in solitude, and through sacrifice, must the seed be sown."—"Ibid.," pp. 36, 37.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 33-43 (1923 ed., pages 27-37).

Part 5
OF SEEDS AND SOILS

Luke 8:5-7

"And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it."

How did Jesus explain the meaning of the types of soil? Luke 8:12-15.

"The seed sown by the wayside represents the word of God as it falls upon the heart of an inattentive hearer. Like the hard-beaten path, trodden down by the feet of men and beasts, is the heart that becomes a highway for the world's traffic, its pleasures and sins."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 44.

What hardens the heart to resist the seed's penetration? Heb. 3:13. Are you allowing this to happen to you? What crushes the seed as it is trodden down? Why did Christ remark that this kind represents those who do not understand? Matt. 13:19. Does this type of man sense his danger? How quickly does the evil one remove the seed? Mark 4:15. What is represented by "fowls"? Luke 8:12, "the devil"; Mark 4:15, "Satan"; Matt. 13:19, "the wicked one."

"Many who make a profession of religion are stony-ground hearers. Like the rock underlying the layer of earth, the selfishness of the natural heart underlies the soil of their good desires and aspirations. The love of self is not subdued. They have not seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the heart has not been humbled under a sense of its guilt. This class may be easily convinced, and appear to be bright converts, but they have only a superficial religion."—*Ibid.,* p. 46.

Thorns are the work of Satan. "He [God] never made a thorn, a thistle, or a tare. These are Satan's work, the result of degeneration, introduced by him among the precious things." —*Testimonies,* Vol. 6, p. 186. So in our lives criticism may take the place of good judgment; lust, the place of true love.

THINK IT THROUGH

What things does Christ specifically mention as choking the seed? Is the soil of my heart unprepared by wrong habits for the sowing of the good seed of the gospel? Am I seeking to get rid of "stones"? Are there the roots of noxious weeds in the recesses of my life which are ready to spring up and strangle my Christian growth?

"Throughout the parable of the sower, Christ represents the different results of the sowing as depending upon the soil. In every case the sower and the seed are the same. Thus He teaches that if the Word of God fails of accomplishing its work in our hearts and lives, the reason is to be found in ourselves. But the result is not beyond our control. True, we cannot change ourselves; but the power of choice is ours, and it rests with us to determine what we will become."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 56.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 43-56 (1923 ed., pages 37-53).

Part 6
FERTILE SOIL

Luke 8:8, 15

"And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

Much of the seed that came from the sower's hand had been wasted. But now the story turns to seed that fell on good ground. How do the three verbs in Christ's explanation fit into your heart when you hear "truth"? Luke 8:15. What is "an honest and good heart"? Is the heart "good" before it hears the Word? See John 8:47; 18:37. "He has an honest heart who yields to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He confesses his guilt, and feels his need of the mercy and love of God. He has a sincere desire to know the truth, that he may obey it."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 58.

Were Levi Matthew and Zacchaeus "good and honest"? or Nathanael? John 1:47. Does this type of hearer picture you? 1 Thess. 2:13. "The good-ground hearers, having heard the word, keep it. Satan with all his agencies of evil is not able to catch it away."—*Ibid.,* p. 59.

What results may we expect when the gospel seed falls into this kind of heart-soil? "The Word of God, received into the soul, will be manifest in good works. Its results will be seen in a Christlike character."—*Ibid.,* p. 60. What accompanies his successful bearing of fruit? "And he brings forth fruit 'with patience.' None who receive God's Word are exempt from difficulty and trial; but when affliction comes, the true Christian does not become restless, distrustful, or despondent. Though we cannot see the definite outcome of affairs, or discern the purpose of God's providences, we are not to cast away our confidence. Remembering the tender mercies of the Lord, we should cast our care upon Him, and with patience wait for His salvation." —*Ibid.,* pp. 60, 61. What is our responsibility in this matter? Jer. 4:3; Hos. 10:12.

THINK IT THROUGH

What am I doing to break up the fallow ground of my heart so that the seed of the gospel can develop within me to the bringing forth of fruit? Am I allowing the Divine Gardener to remove the weeds and the stones? Am I turning my thoughts from my business to His business?

"The good-ground hearer receives the Word 'not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God.' 1 Thess. 2:13. Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself is a true learner. He trembles at the Word; for to him it is a living reality. He opens his understanding and his heart to receive it."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 59.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 56-61 (1923 ed., pages 53-59).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Which plant does Christ use as an illustration of the growth of the kingdom of heaven? Mustard, lily, anise. _____

2. Which common household commodity did Jesus cite as an illustration of the development of grace in the life? _____

3. Complete this sentence: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he _____."

4. What is represented by the sower going forth to sow? _____

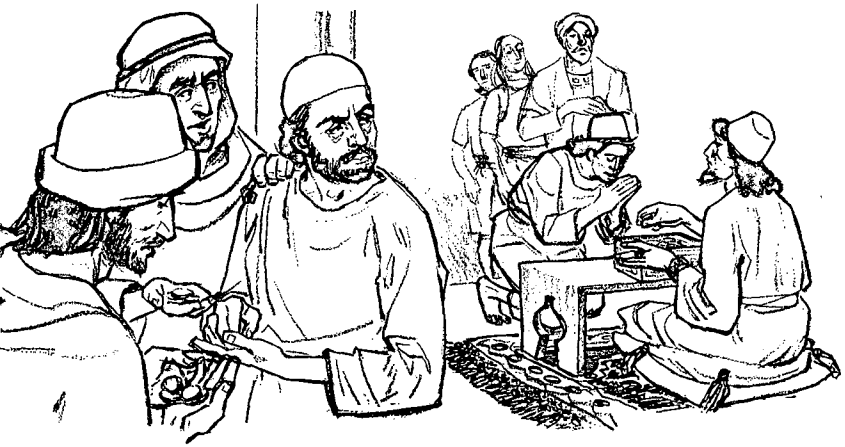
5. Match these four types of soil with the kinds of hearts they represent:

1. wayside ( )	*a.* a heart prepared
2. stony ground ( )	*b.* a heart that makes a profession but is selfish
3. thorny ground ( )	*c.* the inattentive hearer
4. good soil ( )	*d.* a heart in which old habits of life are left to choke the seed

6. How liberally does the seed sown in good ground bring forth? _____

ANSWERS:

1. Mustard. 2. Leaven. 3. Knoweth not how. 4. Christ leaving His heavenly home to bring salvation to the world. 5. 1(c), 2(b), 3(d), 4(a). 6. An hundredfold.



GIVE A MAN A CHANCE! 5

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Acts 9:6.

We often hear remarks to the effect that some people never have a chance to make anything of themselves. It is said that they are born into poverty and ignorance and grow up among associates who have no more ambition than they; hence these individuals never improve themselves and drift from bad to worse. The Bible nowhere subscribes to this picture of man's state and potential. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is pervasive and powerful enough to transform any life and to lead to ultimate complete victory.

In His parables Christ highlighted some of these questions which have plagued minds that refused to look at things from the viewpoint of God's eternal purposes for fallen humanity. In the parables we are to study this week, eternal truth is embedded in perennial circumstances and unfolding episodes. Let us study them from the perspective of our title, "Give a Man a Chance!" We shall see that the major roadblock to a full and rich life is man himself.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Everyone Gets a Break**
   Matt. 20:1, 2
2. **Same Pay for Each**
   Matt. 20:8-16
3. **Settle Out of Court**
   Matt. 5:25, 26
4. **Nothing Could Be Better**
   Matt. 21:33
5. **Greedy Tenants**
   Matt. 21:34-39
6. **What Will Be the Payoff?**
   Matt. 21:40-43

Part 1
EVERYONE GETS A BREAK

Matt. 20:1, 2

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard."

This parable was preceded by the incident of the young ruler who approached the Master Teacher asking what good thing he should *do* to have eternal life. Then came Peter's question, "What shall we have therefore?" Matt. 19:27-30. In answer to this question Christ showed the part played by grace in the Christian life. Who does the "householder" represent? John 15:16; Mark 3:13. What is his "vineyard"? Who are included in the "laborers"? What is the "marketplace"?

All are *called* by the Master to work. They do not ask for work. What covenant did the owner of the vineyard make when he hired the laborers early in the morning? What is suggested by the "early morning" of life? When the householder called others at the third hour, what promises of reward did he make to them? Matt. 20:3, 4. As he still needed help later in the day, what did he do? Matt. 20:5-7.

What is meant by the "penny"? It was a liberal day's wage and the daily pay for a Roman soldier. Did those in each group "earn" their wages? To whom was it a gift? Rom. 6:23.

Do you think that all our activity, separated from Christ's purpose in our lives, is "standing idle in the marketplace"? What is the significance of the phrase "no man hath hired us"? Where were they on the previous expeditions of the householder to find laborers? On what basis does Christ reward those who work for Him? Titus 3:5. How generous is He in His rewards? Eph. 3:20.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I always comparing the rewards which come to me in life with those of others? Am I tempted to indulge in self-pity? Do I murmur against the "injustices" of life and reproach God?

"The householder's dealing with the workers in his vineyard represents God's dealing with the human family. It is contrary to the customs that prevail among men. In worldly business, compensation is given according to the work accomplished. The laborer expects to be paid only that which he earns. But in the parable, Christ was illustrating the principles of His kingdom—a kingdom not of this world. He is not controlled by any human standard." —"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 396, 397.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 396-399 (1923 ed., 402-406).

Part 2
SAME PAY FOR EACH

"So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

Matt. 20:8-16

Do the laborers first called into service represent the Jewish nation? Had they any just cause for complaint when the Gentiles were called into the fold? They had been given what they had agreed to work for. The cause of their grievance lay in themselves—in their jealousy of those who worked but one hour and received a full day's wages.

Did they exhibit the spirit of a hireling? "The Lord desires us to rest in Him without a question as to our measure of reward. When Christ abides in the soul, the thought of reward is not uppermost. This is not the motive that actuates our service."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 398.

Upon what does God measure our service? Do the murmurers remind us of the prodigal's brother? Did they murmur at how much the eleventh-hour servants received or because they themselves did not get more?

THINK IT THROUGH

What is my motive in serving the Lord? Do I work because of my love for Him and my desire to see His work finished? Am I guilty of comparing what I have with what others appear to have?

"Not the amount of labor performed or its visible results but the spirit in which the work is done makes it of value with God. Those who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour were thankful for an opportunity to work. Their hearts were full of gratitude to the one who had accepted them; and when at the close of the day the householder paid them for a full day's work, they were greatly surprised. They knew they had not earned such wages. And the kindness expressed in the countenance of their employer filled them with joy. They never forgot the goodness of the householder or the generous compensation they had received. Thus it is with the sinner who, knowing his unworthiness, has entered the Master's vineyard at the eleventh hour."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 397, 398.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 399-404 (1923 ed., pages 406-413).

Part 3
SETTLE OUT OF COURT

Matt. 5:25, 26

"Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

This is one of the most complex of Christ's parables. It has at least two meanings. Its obvious import lies on the surface. Settle difficulties out of court! Our Lord emphasizes that there is an opportune time for this which should be seized.

Christ's parables reveal spiritual truths, and this parable certainly does. Life is a "walk to the Judge with an adversary by our side." What a picture! Does Satan accompany us to the judgment? See Zech. 3:1-4; Rev. 12:10-12; 1 Peter 5:8.

Phillips's New Testament in Modern English and the New English Bible render "agree" by the words "come to terms." How did Jesus "come to terms" with His adversary in the wilderness? Or did He? Matt. 4:10, 11. What are we admonished to do? James 4:7; Eph. 6:13-16. What assurance does our Saviour give us? John 16:33. Upon what "terms" only can we live through our earthly lives with any hope of being acquitted during the judgment?

Who is to be our judge? John 5:22. Who do you think Christ refers to as "officer," or literally, "under rower," regulated by the master of the ship? In the "harvest" who takes care of the separations? Matt.13:30; 39. What is meant by "the prison"? Isa. 61:1, last part; Ps. 142:7. What was Christ's ministry to include? Isa. 42:6, 7.

THINK IT THROUGH

What am I doing day by day to ensure acquittal in the judgment? Who is my Advocate? 1 John 2:1. My Judge? John 5:22. My Witness? Rev. 3:14. Would the prisoner ever be able to pay his debts?

"It is true, many an ordinary debtor who has been thrown into prison has somehow managed to pay his debt. . . . But this possibility pertains only to the figurative language of Jesus. It presents no possibility for a sinner after death and judgment because the Scriptures know of no such possibility. . . . The only answer the Scriptures give is: 'Payment there is impossible.' "—R. C. H. Lenski, "The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel," page 225.

Part 4
NOTHING COULD BE BETTER

Matt. 21:33

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country."

Read also Luke 20:9-19.

The Jews were familiar with Isaiah's touching parable of the vineyard and the Lord's care for it. Isa. 5:1-7. The householder *planted* the vineyard. Ex. 15:17; Ps. 44:2. The "hedge" set around it represents the law that keeps evil out and righteousness safe within. The "tower" portrays the sanctuary or temple—a place where the lookout watched and also a place for the defense of God's people. See Hab. 2:1. Read the introduction to *Prophets and Kings.*

The vineyard was rented out to "husbandmen." Did it ever belong to them?

What more could be done? the Lord asks. Isa. 5:4. Can you think of anything? What a chance man has! God has done everything possible for His servants that they may fulfill His plans for them. See Ps. 84:11. God's leaving His vineyard to His husbandmen demonstrates His patience.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I ever tally up all that God has done for the best development of my character? Can I suggest to my heavenly Father any good thing He has withheld from me? Has God been patient with my weakness?

"The parable of the two sons was followed by the parable of the vineyard. In the one, Christ had set before the Jewish teachers the importance of obedience. In the other, He pointed to the rich blessings bestowed upon Israel, and in these showed God's claim to their obedience. He set before them the glory of God's purpose, which through obedience they might have fulfilled. Withdrawing the veil from the future, He showed how, by failure to fulfill His purpose, the whole nation was forfeiting His blessing, and bringing ruin upon itself."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 284.

"God had chosen a people from the world to be trained and educated by Christ. The prophet says, 'The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.' Isa. 5:7. Upon this people God had bestowed great privileges, blessing them richly from His abundant goodness. He looked for them to honor Him by yielding fruit. They were to reveal the principles of His kingdom. In the midst of a fallen, wicked world they were to represent the character of God."—"Ibid.," p. 285.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 284-292 (1923 ed., pages 287-295).

Part 5
GREEDY TENANTS

"And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him."

Matt. 21:34-39

What is meant by the "time of the fruit"? "Fruit" represents both character development and souls saved for the kingdom. The fruit of the Spirit must be seen in the life. Gal. 5:22, 23.

Who were the "servants" sent by the owner of the vineyard? See Heb. 1:1, 2; Jer. 44:4. They would include prophets, judges, kings, and leaders in Old Testament times. Who are they today? How were these messengers from God treated? What details do Luke and Mark add to Matthew's account? See Mark 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16. Note Mark's terms "wounded in the head," and "shamefully handled." Can you think of Old Testament examples of this? See Jer. 20:1, 2; 37:15; 1 Kings 18:13. And in the New Testament? See Acts 7:52; 1 Thess. 2:15. Compare Heb. 11:37, 38.

How do you regard those who would help you to present good fruit for your Master? Has this response been found true in each era of God's church?

Finally, whom did God send? See Mark 12:6; John 5:18. Did the husbandmen recognize the position of this Messenger? Compare Heb. 1:2. Does the parable accurately portray what happened to the Son when He was sent to the vineyard? Compare John 11:47-53. What is the significance of the fact that Jesus was slain, "cast out of the *vineyard"?* Heb. 13:12, 13. How was the husbandmen's plot carried out? What is signified by their throwing Him *outside* of the vineyard?

THINK IT THROUGH

We are horrified in this story at the manner in which the servants and the son were treated by the husbandmen. But am I by my attitude and actions giving the same treatment to His messengers and to Him?

"The Jewish rulers did not love God; therefore they cut themselves away from Him, and rejected all His overtures for a just settlement. Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. . . .

"Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice. Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 293, 294.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 292-304 (1923 ed., pages 295-308).

Part 6
WHAT WILL BE THE PAYOFF?

"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

Matt. 21:40-43

What application can be made of the expression "when the Lord . . . cometh," individually, nationally to the Jews, and at the end of the world? The priests had been listening so intently to the story that they did not immediately grasp its full application. In reply to Christ's question, what sentence did they pass on the wicked husbandmen? "Unwittingly they had pronounced their own doom."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 295. The kingdom was indeed taken from the Jews and given to those who should bring forth its fruit—the Christians. The prophecy of the Jewish leaders came to pass exactly! See Gal. 3:9, 29 for the role of the church.

In *The Desire of Ages,* pages 597, 598, we are told the story of the rejected stone: "When the temple of Solomon was erected, the immense stones for the walls and the foundation were entirely prepared at the quarry; after they were brought to the place of building, not an instrument was to be used upon them; the workmen had only to place them in position. For use in the foundation, one stone of unusual size and peculiar shape had been brought; but the workmen could find no place for it, and would not accept it. It was an annoyance to them as it lay unused in their way. Long it remained a rejected stone. But when the builders came to the laying of the corner, they searched for a long time to find a stone of sufficient size and strength, and of the proper shape, to take that particular place, and bear the great weight which would rest upon it. . . . The builders examined this stone. It had borne every test but one. If it could bear the test of severe pressure, they decided to accept it for the cornerstone. The trial was made. The stone was accepted, brought to its assigned position, and found to be an exact fit. In prophetic vision, Isaiah was shown that this stone was a symbol of Christ."

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I ever brushed aside Christ's will for me because it was apposed to my desires, only to find later that He was the answer to my problems? What should I do to ensure that my spiritual eyesight is clear and discerning? Rev. 3:18 (last part); 2 Peter 1:9.

"The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 296.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. What did the householder promise those he called to work in his vineyard at the third, the sixth, the ninth, and the eleventh hours? _____

2. Delete the incorrect phrases of the ones in parentheses in this sentence. The laborers called (first, at the third hour, at the sixth hour, at the ninth hour, at the eleventh hour) were the ones who were satisfied with their wages.

3. Which parable taught that it is never wise to procrastinate in making things right? _____

4. In the parable of the vineyard match these with what they represent:

1. the vineyard ( )	*a.* God
2. the householder ( )	*b.* the temple
3. the hedge ( )	*c.* the church
4. the tower ( )	*d.* the law

5. Who were represented in the parable by the servants? _____

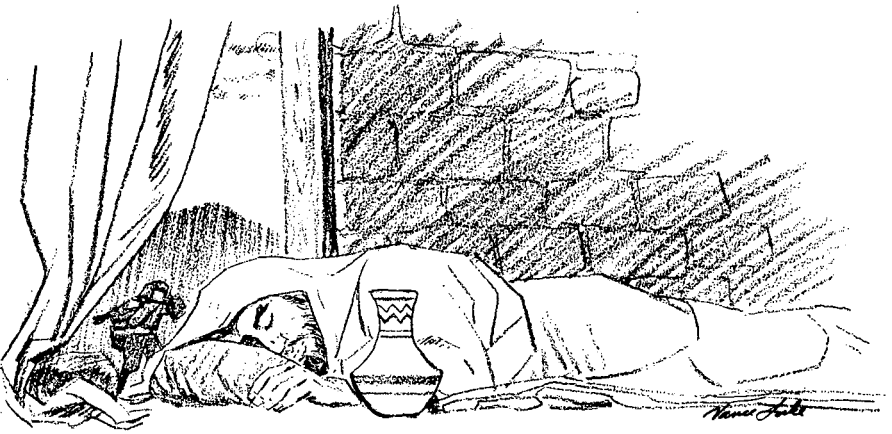
By the son? _____

6. What does the owner of the vineyard do to his faithless servants? _____

_____

ANSWERS:

1. Whatsoever was right. 2. Delete "first." 3. Agreeing with the adversary. 4. 1(c), 2(a), 3(d), 4(b). 5. The Lord's prophets, Christ. 6. Destroy them.



SATAN'S STRATAGEMS 6

"Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:33.

In every war resourceful men devise many sinister tricks to destroy the enemy. They set up booby traps in the most unexpected places. When an unthinking soldier touches some part of one of these, he sets off an explosion that kills him and those near him. Retreating soldiers attach lethal devices to items which are designed to arouse the curiosity or cupidity of those who follow. Valuable binoculars, pistols, water bottles, and other articles are fixed as alluring bait. As soon as a foolish soldier picks up one of these, he is blown to pieces. By his training and desire for self-preservation the soldier should have been on the alert for these booby traps.

Satan employs ten thousand other strategems in most cunning deceptions. In the parables that we shall study this week our Lord calls attention to some of the knavery against which we should be continually on the alert.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Fields of Paradise**
   Matt. 13:24
2. **While Men Slept**
   Matt. 13:25
3. **Counterfeit Grain**
   Mal. 3:18
4. **Devils Love a Vacuum**
   Matt. 12:43-45
5. **Gauging the Enemy**
   Luke 14:31-33
6. **Two Champions War**
   Luke 11:21-23

Part 1
FIELDS OF PARADISE
Matt. 13:24

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field."

Whom does the sower represent? Matt. 13:37. What is the significance of this appellation? The seed that God sowed is the only perfect seed. When Christ created the world, what was His estimate of all He had made? Gen. 1:31. "Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial."—*The Great Controversy,* page 493.

The field was ruined by an enemy's oversowing it with tares. What is represented originally by the "field" and the "good seed"? After sin entered the world, where did the Lord obtain further good seed? Now "the good seed represents those who are born of the word of God, the truth."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 70, 71. See Matt. 13:38. "'The field,' Christ said, 'is the world.' But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world. The parable is a description of that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished through the church."—*Ibid.*, p. 70.

In our present circumstances in the world, who or what are represented by the sower? the seed? (consider James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23) the field? Satan traps us into thinking tares are wheat!

THINK IT THROUGH

Does a perfect environment guarantee freedom from sin and temptation? Could God have done more to improve the conditions in His field? See Isa. 5:4.

"We have each of us an individual work to do, to gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, to watch unto prayer. The mind must be firmly controlled to dwell upon subjects that will strengthen the moral powers. . . . The thoughts must be pure, the meditations of the heart must be clean, if the words of the mouth are to be words acceptable to Heaven and helpful to your associates.

"The mind should be guarded carefully. Nothing should be allowed to enter that will harm or destroy its healthy vigor. But to prevent this, it should be preoccupied with good seed, which, springing to life, will bring forth fruit-bearing branches. . . . A field left uncultivated speedily produces a rank growth of thistles and tangled vines, which exhaust the soil and are worthless to the owner."—"My Life Today," page 83.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," page 70 (1923 ed., pages 69, 70).

Part 2
WHILE MEN SLEPT
Matt. 13:25

"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

When did the enemy do his evil work in the field? Matt. 13:25, first part. He is called "The wicked one." Whose enemy is he?

Today the devil takes advantage of every opportunity to catch men off guard. Eve was off guard—spiritually asleep—when she wandered from Adam's side and was tempted by the devil in Eden. Her statement to God (Gen. 3:13) literally means "The serpent caused me to forget."

In another illustration Jesus said, "Know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up." Matt. 24:43. What are some of the symptoms of spiritual sleep? Lack of prayer and Bible study, lack of self-examination, lack of sharing one's faith with others, absorption in things of the world—social, business, material things. Can you add to this list?

After Satan had done his foul business, what is said of him? Was his work immediately apparent? Satan traps us into a complacent lack of vigilance.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I allowing myself to be lulled into spiritual sleep by worldly interests? What was one of the problems of the foolish virgins?

"Satan is making earnest, persevering efforts to corrupt the mind and debase the character of every young person; and shall we who have more experience stand as mere spectators, and see him accomplish his purpose without hindrance? Let us stand at our post as minutemen, to work for these youth, and through the help of God hold them back from the pit of destruction. In the parable, while men slept, the enemy sowed tares; and while you, my brethren and sisters, are unconscious of his work, he is gathering an army of youth under his banner; and he exults, for through them he carries on his warfare against God."—"Fundamentals of Christian Education," page 90.

For deeper study: "Testimonies," Vol. 2, p. 205.

Part 3
COUNTERFEIT GRAIN
Mal. 3:18

"Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not."

Read the rest of the parable of the tares—Matt. 13: 26-30.

What custom helped Christ's hearers in the understanding of this parable? "In the East, men sometimes took revenge upon an enemy by strewing his newly sown fields with the seeds of some noxious weed that, while growing, closely resembled wheat. Springing up with the wheat, it injured the crop and brought trouble and loss to the owner of the field."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 71.

What were the first evidences that something was amiss? By what may we recognize evil? Matt. 7:20. Who are represented by the "tares"? "The tares represent a class who are the fruit or embodiment of error, of false principles."—*Ibid.,* p. 71. Some Bible versions use the word "darnel" instead of "tares." Darnel is a weed which until ripe resembles wheat. Can the question of the origin of evil receive a more explicit answer than Christ gave? Matt. 13:28, first part.

What course of action was recommended by the owner's servants? Compare Luke 9:54. Why did the owner of the field decide not to do as they suggested? Matt. 13:29. How does his statement foreshadow what will occur at the end of time? Matt. 13:30.

What is the difference between "the servants" and "the reapers"? "I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, 'Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.' "—*Early Writings,* page 118.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I show impatience when the "tares" (in the church) are not cleaned out immediately, or do I patiently wait for the heavenly Owner to do the work of separation in His own time? Who will finally separate the good and bad?

"Do not forcibly pull up the tares, lest in rooting them up the precious blades will become loosened. Both ministers and church members should be very cautious, lest they get a zeal not according to knowledge. There is danger of doing too much to cure difficulties in the church, which if let alone, will frequently work their own cure. It is bad policy to take hold of matters in any church prematurely. We shall have to exercise the greatest care, patience, and self-control to bear these things and not go to work in our own spirit to set them in order."—"Testimonies," Vol. 3, pp. 113, 114.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 70-75 (1923 ed., pages 70-73).

Part 4
DEVILS LOVE A VACUUM

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

Matt. 12:43-45

This parable is a warning to those who seem impressed with the message of the gospel but who do not give themselves up entirely to the control of the Holy Spirit. After their conversion their lives and minds are empty of heavenly principles. With what was the mind decorated? An unoccupied house is in danger. It invites burglars. Vandals may break in and wreak havoc. So with the one whose heart is empty of the influences of righteousness.

"Christ shows that there can be no such thing as neutrality in His service. The soul must not be satisfied with anything short of entire consecration—consecration of thought, voice, spirit, and every organ of mind and body. It is not enough that the vessel be emptied: it must be filled with the grace of Christ." —Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary,* Vol. 5, p. 1093.

With his defenses down, the last state of the man in this parable was worse than the first. He then allowed every kind of evil to control him. So today we see those who have at first seemed favorable to the gospel turn back to become worse than they were before they saw the light of the truth.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I allowing the Spirit of God to occupy my life, or is my mind a dangerously empty house? With what should I seek to fill my mind? Can a rich and full mind ever be the result of cheap reading and entertainment and empty talk?

"There were many in Christ's day, as there are today, over whom the control of Satan for the time seemed broken; through the grace of God they were set free from the evil spirits that had held dominion over the soul. They rejoiced in the love of God; but, like the stony-ground hearers of the parable, they did not abide in His love. They did not surrender themselves to God daily, that Christ might dwell in the heart; and when the evil spirit returned, with 'seven other spirits more wicked than himself,' they were wholly dominated by the power of evil."—"The Desire of Ages," pages 323, 324.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 323, 324.

Part 5
GAUGING THE ENEMY

"Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

Luke 14:31-33

Like the parable of the man who builds a tower, the parable of the king who went to war against another king teaches us the need to count the cost before embarking on any enterprise. The king takes counsel with others and carefully assesses the strength of his resources before setting out to meet his enemy.

Life is a battle. Who are the adversaries we have to meet? Do we have any assurance that we can overcome? Diverting our attention from making necessary preparation to meet the enemy is one of Satan's stratagems.

Is Satan now a defeated foe? See Rev. 12:10. Do we join forces with the King of all, or with the "prince of this world" who comes against Him?

THINK IT THROUGH

Are there any valid reasons why I do not employ the help God gives to me? Are complacency, procrastination, or carelessness my downfall?

"To us as well as to the disciples, Christ has given the work of carrying the truth to the world. But before engaging in this great and aggressive warfare, upon which eternal results depend, Christ invites all to count the cost. He assures them that if they take hold of the work with undivided hearts, giving themselves as light bearers to the world, if they will take hold of His strength, they will make peace with Him, and obtain supernatural assistance that will enable them in their weakness to do the deeds of Omnipotence."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1121.

For deeper study: "Testimonies," Vol. 5, p. 83.

Part 6
TWO CHAMPIONS WAR

Luke 11:21-23

"When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."

Read also Luke 11:17-20.

This parable is about two champions, a strong man and a stronger man. In the spiritual picture presented in the Bible, power to resist our foe results from:

1. Wearing the whole armor of God. Eph. 6:11-18.
2. Obeying the Captain of our salvation.
3. Fighting to the end. 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; Rev. 2:10, last part.

This strong man appeared to have all these qualities. He was also "armed." From the very beginning there is in this "war" a king leader. Rev. 12:7. He has his own weapons. But lack of accurate appraisal of the enemy, failure to rely on the General of God's army, always leads to defeat.

Leading a man to trust in himself is another of Satan's devious methods. How does this take from us all our armor? In what ways does Samson illustrate this perennial truth? Judges 13 to 16. Upon whose side in this great controversy do the details of my daily life place me—with Christ or among those who "scatter"? Satan traps us into laying down our arms and giving up too soon.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I keep my spiritual armor (described by Paul) in good condition, ready for the assaults of Satan? Am I ever tempted into self-confidence? What is the difference between presumption and faith?

"It is as true now as when Christ was upon the earth, that every inroad made by the gospel upon the enemy's dominion is met by fierce opposition from his vast armies. The conflict that is right upon us will be the most terrible ever witnessed. But though Satan is represented as being as strong as the strong man armed, his overthrow will be complete, and everyone who unites with him in choosing apostasy rather than loyalty will perish with him."—"Testimonies," Vol. 6, p. 407.

For deeper study: "Messages to Young People," page 104.

Part 7 ◇ **SUMMARY QUESTIONS** ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. What is the field where the sower sows his seed? _____

2. Fill in the missing words. "Men ought always to _____, and not to _____."

3. Why did the householder not want the tares to be pulled up as soon as they were detected? _____

4. "Satan finds mischief still for idle hands to do." What parable that we have been studying this week is suggested by this well-known proverb? _____

_____

5. Who carefully counted the cost before an important undertaking? _____

6. Finish this sentence: The parable of the strong man armed teaches the necessity of being completely on _____

ANSWERS:

1. The church of Christ in the world. 2. Pray, faint. 3. Lest they uproot the wheat also. 4. The parable of the empty house. 5. The king who went to war. 6. The side of Christ.

WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU? 7

"For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee." Psalm 86:5.

Among the dangers which beset us in our relationships with one another and with God is the tendency to be unkind and unforgiving. In the parables we shall study this week, Christ deals with the condition of man's heart.

In our first parable, a man, after he had been forgiven his enormous debt, was neither grateful nor kind. He went and gave vent to his feelings against one who had injured him only slightly.

At the feast in his house Simon the sinner blamed Christ for not condemning Mary the forgiven sinner. Feelings of self-justification overrode all his feelings of love.

In the story of the two boys, independence and rebellion were causing their problems.

The crooked manager looked only to himself.

As we study these stories we may well inquire of ourselves, Am I allowing anything to irritate me and destroy my peace of mind?

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Runaway Debt**
   Matt. 18:23-27
2. **"As I Have Loved You"**
   Matt. 18:28-35
3. **What Was Bothering Simon?**
   Luke 7:36-39
4. **Love Power**
   Luke 7:40-43
5. **The Easy Yes!**
   Matt. 21:28-32
6. **The Shark**
   Luke 16:1-9

Part 1
RUNAWAY DEBT

"Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt."

Matt. 18:23-27

This parable points to the time and the basis for the settling of life's accounts. It tells of debts between master and servant and between servants. Who is the "king"? What question of Peter's preceded the telling of this parable? Matt. 18:21. Why did he ask it? How often did Jews forgive in Christ's day? "The rabbis limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses. Peter, carrying out, as he supposed, the teaching of Christ, thought to extend it to seven, the number signifying perfection." —*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 243.

What was Christ's reply? Matt. 18:22. The size of the debt owed the king was staggering—"about $6,221,880 . . . , though worth much more in purchasing power."—*SDA Bible Commentary,* on Matt. 18:24. Christ emphasized that the man could never repay such a debt. What do we owe our Master? Is it ever possible for us to pay the debt we owe?

The king ordered the man and all he had to be "sold" to liquidate his debt. This was according to custom. What did the debtor do before he begged forgiveness and pleaded for mercy? What did he show a willingness to acknowledge and to do? How freely was he forgiven? What are the most important requirements made of us in our indebtedness to Christ in order to gain forgiveness? Who actually pays our debt? Isa. 1:18; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

THINK IT THROUGH

Can I ever pay my debt to God? Do I regularly contemplate the kindness of Him who has paid it all?

"The pardon granted by this king represents a divine forgiveness of all sin. Christ is represented by the king, who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant. Man was under the condemnation of the broken law. He could not save himself, and for this reason Christ came to this world, clothed His divinity with humanity, and gave His life, the just for the unjust. He gave Himself for our sins, and to every soul He freely offers the blood-bought pardon. 'With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.' Ps. 130:7."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 244, 245.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 243, 244 (1923 ed., same).

Part 2
"AS I HAVE LOVED YOU"

Matt. 18:28-30

"But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt."

Finish reading the parable—verses 31-35.

This section of the parable covers a debt between one servant and another. The ratio of the debts is about half a million to one! The forgiven servant was owed by his fellow one hundred pence—a sum comparatively small, which he might earn in four months at the rate of "a penny a day." Matt. 20:2. Did the creditor go and look for him?

Notice the rough treatment this servant gave to his debtor. He "took him by the throat." This was far rougher treatment than he himself had received at the hands of his creditor. The plea made by his debtor is worded exactly the same as the one he himself had made to his king. Is it always right to press our rights? Contrast the attitudes of the two creditors—the king and the servant. Why were the other fellow servants "very sorry"? When they reported the matter, what was the feeling aroused in the king? Does this have a lesson for us? Was this just?

What does Christ teach about forgiveness? Luke 17:3. The wickedness of the servant is shown by his refusing to be merciful after he had received mercy. James 2:13; 1 John 4:11. So he is delivered to the "tormentors." Who or what are these? Why does the king revoke his previous decision? Ezek. 33:12, 13. Do sins once forgiven return on the sinner?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I expecting to enjoy the forgiveness of God for my shortcoming while at the same time I refuse to forgive those who have wronged me?

"How many are today manifesting the same spirit. When the debtor pleaded with his lord for mercy, he had no true sense of the greatness of his debt. He did not realize his helplessness. He hoped to deliver himself. 'Have patience with me,' he said, 'and I will pay thee all.' So there are many who hope by their own works to merit God's favor. They do not realize their helplessness. They do not accept the grace of God as a free gift, but are trying to build themselves up in self-righteousness. Their own hearts are not broken and humbled on account of sin, and they are exacting and unforgiving toward others."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 245-246.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 244-251 (1923 ed., pages 244-250).

Part 3
WHAT WAS BOTHERING SIMON?

"And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This Man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner."

Luke 7:36-39

Read also John 12:1-3.

The setting for this parable is the home of Simon the Pharisee. There was no cordiality in his invitation to Christ. He deliberately ignored the courtesy of giving his Guest water to wash His feet! Do you get the impression that it was condescension that led Simon to ask Jesus to his home? He was certainly patronizing in his attitude to Mary, whom he regarded as a sinful woman. How did he have such a clear knowledge of her past? See *The Desire of Ages*, page 566.

Simon's Pharisaic pride was offended by Mary's show of gratitude and affection. He still had some misgivings about the identity of Jesus, for he said to himself, "If He were a prophet." Luke 7:39. What other lessons besides the need for appreciation and gratitude did our Lord wish to teach as He told the parable of the two debtors?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is my eagerness to pronounce other people sinners causing me to overlook my own misdeeds? Am I, like Simon, so ignorant of Christ that I judge the real or imagined misdeeds of others by my own standards?

"By curing Simon of leprosy, Christ had saved him from a living death. But now Simon questioned whether the Saviour were a prophet. Because Christ allowed this woman to approach Him, because He did not indignantly spurn her as one whose sins were too great to be forgiven, because He did not show that he realized she had fallen, Simon was tempted to think that He was not a prophet. . . .

"But it was Simon's ignorance of God and of Christ that led him to think as he did. He did not realize that God's Son must act in God's way, with compassion, tenderness, and mercy. Simon's way was to take no notice of Mary's penitent service."—"The Desire of Ages," page 566.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 557-566.

Part 4
LOVE POWER

"And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

Luke 7:40-43

By this story Christ sought to meet Simon's need for an understanding of forgiveness. What does His method reveal of Christ's character? Ps. 18:35. Do we exhibit the same gentle attitude in dealing with those in need? What was the ratio of the two debts? Did the difference in the debts make any difference to the attitude of the creditor? Does God allow any difference in the "amount" of sins to affect His forgiving us? Is He as ready to forgive the one who has sinned greatly as the one who has sinned little? Ps. 103:3. What actually affects His forgiveness?

"Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence."—*The Desire of Ages,* pages 566, 567.

Did Simon get the point of the parable? What was it that won his heart? "Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests. . . . Stern denunciation would have hardened Simon against repentance, but patient admonition convinced him of his error. He saw the magnitude of the debt which he owed his Lord. His pride was humbled, he repented, and the proud Pharisee became a lowly, self-sacrificing disciple."—*Ibid.,* pp. 567, 568.

THINK IT THROUGH

How great do I consider my debt to the divine Creator? Do I ever try to brush it under the rug by calling attention to the debts of others? In what ways is my Saviour appealing to me to make all things right?

"Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful, very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping, contrite one away. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration."—"The Desire of Ages," page 568.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 566-568.

Part 5
THE EASY YES!

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

Matt. 21:28-32

This parable followed the question of the chief priests and the scribes concerning the authority by which Christ carried out His works. It was not evidence of Christ's authority that they needed—they knew what it was. But they desired a declaration by Jesus Himself that He was the Messiah. With this they hoped that they would be able to stir up the people and procure His death. What was the significance of the question Jesus asked them (Matt. 21:24, 25) concerning the baptism of John? Why did this question discomfit them so greatly? Because they were on the spot, how did they reply? This was a lie and a weak reply, but it was all they could do to save face in the situation.

Jesus then told the parable we have just read. What was "bugging" the first son when he rudely replied, "No, sir"? Why did he not wish to be about his father's business? What might have induced him afterward to repent and go? The Spirit had worked on his heart revealing the character of his father and his own obligations. The second son said, "Yes, sir." Compare Israel's reaction in Ex. 24:7. This boy talked a lot but did nothing. Compare Isa. 29:13. What was "bugging" him? Who actually did the father's will? On what does God judge us, on our words or our works?

THINK IT THROUGH: **What shows in my life—my words or my works? Do I refuse to do God's will through rude ingratitude? What goodnesses of God have induced me to enter His service?**

"Self-righteousness is not true righteousness, and those who cling to it will be left to take the consequences of holding a fatal deception. Many today claim to obey the commandments of God, but they have not the love of God in their hearts to flow forth to others. Christ calls them to unite with Him in His work for the saving of the world, but they content themselves with saying, 'I go, sir.' They do not go. They do not cooperate with those who are doing God's service. They are idlers. Like the unfaithful son, they make false promises to God."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 279.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 272-283 (1923 ed., pages 273-285).

Part 6
THE SHARK

Luke 16:1-4

"And He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses."

Read the rest of the parable and its conclusion in verses 5-9.

"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." In this story Jesus immediately continued the discussion introduced at the end of the story of the prodigal son. This was an account of events which had actually happened.

"With the prospect of discharge before him, the steward saw three paths open to his choice. He must labor, beg, or starve."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 367.

The steward's solution was to defraud his master to the advantage of the master's debtors, so placing them under obligation to him so that they in turn would be good to him. How urgently did he act? His lord commended this "prudence."

Who are "the children of this world"? Who are "the children of light"? The unfaithful steward was a picture of the Jews themselves. To them had been entrusted the oracles of God, but they had used God's gifts, of which they were stewards, for selfish purposes to exalt and enrich themselves.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I putting all my talents and resources, my energy and my knowledge, into the work God calls me to do so that when the end comes I may be ready for eternity?

"Those who spend their lives in laying up worldly treasure show less wisdom, less thought and care for their eternal well-being, than did the unjust steward for his earthly support. Less wise than the children of this world in their generation are these professed children of the light."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 372.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 366-375 (1923 ed., pages 371-379).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Who are represented by the man who owed his master a vast sum of money? _____

2. What quality was the king's debtor lacking in? _____

3. Which of these qualities would you say Simon lacked—true hospitality, reverence, gratitude, compassion? _____

4. To whom did Jesus say the words, "Thou hast rightly judged"? and why?

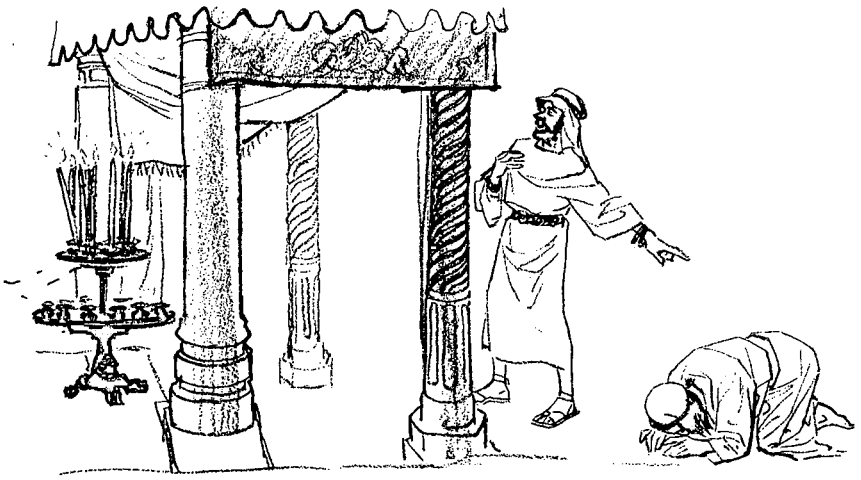
_____

5. What classes, despised by the Jews, did Jesus commend for their willingness to do the Father's will? _____

6. COMPLETE this sentence: This parable teaches that worldly men often show more wisdom in looking after their own interests than do the servants of God in looking after _____.

ANSWERS:

1. Every sinner. 2. Compassion. 3. All of them. 4. Simon, when he admitted that the greater debtor in Christ's story loved him most. 5. Publicans and harlots. 6. Their Master's.



IT PAYS TO PRAY 8

"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1.

Prayer is often not valued highly because its mystery and power are not understood or realized through experiment. Jesus has left us several parables to teach us attitudes and approaches to effective prayer. He Himself set an amazing example. Even those disciples who were nearest to Him soon realized that they actually knew very little about true praying. So they asked Him to teach them.

After giving them a pattern prayer, our Lord illustrated attitudes in the petitioner which were to blend with attitudes in God. We should ask in order to share our blessing with those in need. There is no one time to pray—we may pray in all circumstances and places and times. Persistence and heart's need will always gain an answer from our prayer-hearing God.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Teach Us to Pray**
   Luke 11:1-4
2. **A Friend Comes Asking**
   Luke 11:5-8
3. **Widow in Need**
   Luke 18:1-8
4. **The Snob**
   Luke 18:9-12
5. **Heart's Cry**
   Luke 18:13, 14
6. **Peter—Pharisee or Publican?**
   Mark 14:27-29

Part 1
TEACH US TO PRAY
Luke 11:1

"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Read also verses 2-4.

Did not the disciples know how to pray before this? They must have been taught both in their homes and also in the synagogues. What then made them ask Jesus to teach them to pray? What was there about Christ's prayer life that made them feel that their own praying was inadequate? They knew the theory of praying, the form of words, and pious phrases; but they now longed to pray as their Master prayed. They had noted on many occasions that His seasons of prayer did something for Him that their prayers had never done for them.

"The Saviour's face was irradiated with a celestial brightness. He seemed to be in the very presence of the Unseen, and there was a living power in His words as of one who spoke with God."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing,* page 102.

How did Jesus treat their request for instruction? Luke 11:2-4. He gave them a model prayer. It was not new to them, for He had already given it to them in the Sermon on the Mount. "That which He has before taught them He repeats, as if He would say, You need to understand what I have already given. It has a depth of meaning you have not yet fathomed."—*Ibid.*, p. 103.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is prayer a real experience in my life, or is it merely the repetition of well-worn phrases? Do I pray according to the spirit and intent of my Master's prayer?

"The hearts of the listening disciples were deeply moved. They had marked how often He spent long hours in solitude in communion with His Father. His days were passed in ministering to the crowds that pressed upon Him, and in unveiling the treacherous sophistry of the rabbis, and this incessant labor often left Him so utterly wearied that His mother and brothers, and even His disciples, had feared that His life would be sacrificed. But as He returned from the hours of prayer that closed the toilsome day, they marked the look of peace upon His face, the sense of refreshment that seemed to pervade His presence. It was from hours spent with God that He came forth, morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men. The disciples had come to connect His hours of prayer with the power of His words and works. Now, as they listened to His supplication, their hearts were awed and humbled."—"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 102, 103.

For deeper study: "Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 102, 103 (1943 ed., pages 151-153).

Part 2
A FRIEND COMES ASKING

"And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

Luke 11:5-8

Jesus told this parable to illustrate the lesson He desired His disciples to learn concerning the motivation behind their prayers. Jesus prayed for strength to help others in their needs. John 17:9, 20-23. What should be our motive in praying? Eph. 6:18-20. It is significant that the importunate man in the parable asked his friend for bread with which to feed others. Who is his unexpected guest?

Bread in the Scriptures is a symbol of spiritual food. What made the man so desperately diligent? Christ's word for "importunity" means "shamelessness." Have we a supply of the bread of life on hand to give to those who ask us? 1 Peter 3:15.

We must note that the selfish, lazy neighbor in the parable does not represent the character of our heavenly Father: "The lesson is drawn, not by comparison, but by contrast. A selfish man will grant an urgent request, in order to rid himself of one who disturbs his rest. But God delights to give. He is full of compassion, and He longs to grant the requests of those who come unto Him in faith. He gives to us that we may minister to others and thus become like Himself."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 141.

How did Jesus illustrate the Father's willingness to answer the prayers of His children? Luke 11:9-13. Compare Eph. 3:20.

Instead of the three loaves the man requested, how many is he actually given?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it perhaps because my prayers are too formal or too selfish that they do not seem to be effective? Do I ask to have, or to give?

"Our prayers are not to be a selfish asking, merely for our own benefit. We are to ask that we may give. The principle of Christ's life must be the principle of our lives. 'For their sakes,' He said, speaking of His disciples, 'I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified.' John 17:19. The same devotion, the same self-sacrifice, the same subjection to the claims of the Word of God, that were manifest in Christ, must be seen in His servants."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 142.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 139-149 (1923 ed., pages 137-149).

Part 3
WIDOW IN NEED

"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."

Luke 18:1-5

Read also verses 6-8.

The emphasis of this parable went beyond praying. It underlined the thought "and not to faint." The judge had treated the widow both unjustly and contemptuously. He delighted in showing his authority. Although she had a just cause, he drove her many times from the judgment seat. Finally her persistence compelled him to give her a hearing.

Apparently some enemy was trying to wrest her money from her, for her prayer was, "Avenge me of mine adversary." Who is the enemy of God's people? 1 Peter 5:8. It is for deliverance from the power of Satan and his agents that in this parable Christ teaches His disciples to pray. A prophetic picture of the victory which will result is given us by the prophet Zechariah. Zech. 3:1-5.

What expression did the judge use to describe the woman's effect on him? It literally means "smite me below the eye"; figuratively, "beat me out," or "wear me out."

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I daily thankful that I have a compassionate Listener in the heavenly courts, ready to free me from my adversary, ready to supply all my needs for time and for eternity?

"The character of the judge in the parable, who feared not God nor regarded man, was presented by Christ to show the kind of judgment that was then being executed, and that would soon be witnessed at His trial. He desires His people in all time to realize how little dependence can be placed on earthly rulers or judges in the day of adversity. Often the elect people of God have to stand before men in official positions who do not make the Word of God their guide and counselor, but who follow their own unconsecrated, undisciplined impulses.

"In the parable of the unjust judge, Christ has shown what we should do. 'Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?' Christ, our example, did nothing to vindicate or deliver Himself. He committed His case to God. So His followers are not to accuse or condemn, or to resort to force in order to deliver themselves."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 171.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 164-180 (1923 ed., pages 167-183).

Part 4
THE SNOB

"And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

Luke 18:9-12

What attitude did Jesus notice in some to whom He directed this parable? The Pharisees were the conservative sect of the Jews and were proud and boastful. They made a great display of praying in public to demonstrate their piety.

With whom does Jesus say the Pharisee prayed? How far did his prayers reach? For what does he give thanks? What is his aim in praying? His prayer is entirely negative. He omits any reference to the goodness or the mercy of His Creator. Does he acknowledge his sin and need? How high was his estimate of himself above his fellow human beings?

Notice what he said of the publican. What bearing to us has Christ's warning against the philosophy of the Pharisees? Matt. 16:6. Is self-congratulation ever in place?

THINK IT THROUGH

As I kneel to pray, what picture of my attitudes and desires do the angels see? With whom am I talking? By stressing the diseases of others do I make my health any better?

"The religion of the Pharisee does not touch the soul. He is not seeking Godlikeness of character, a heart filled with love and mercy. He is satisfied with a religion that has to do only with the outward life. His righteousness is his own—the fruit of his own works—and judged by a human standard.

"Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, so he judges other men by himself. His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. His self-righteousness leads to accusing. Other men he condemns as transgressors of God's law. Thus he is making manifest the very spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. With this spirit it is impossible for him to enter into communion with God. He goes down to his house destitute of the divine blessing."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 151.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 150, 151 (1923 ed., pages 151, 152).

Part 5
HEART'S CRY

Luke 18:13, 14

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

While the Pharisee stood where all could see and witness his praying, the publican stood "afar off." What picture of his relationship to God does this convey? So great was the sense of his own sinfulness that he felt he was unworthy to mingle with the other worshipers in the temple court.

In what other ways was his humility manifested? His was a short prayer, but effective. What did his prayer reveal about his understanding of God? Compare Ezra's prayer in Ezra 9:6.

"Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt, he stood as if alone in God's presence. His only desire was for pardon and peace, his only plea was the mercy of God."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 152.

"God be merciful"—the word "merciful" from the same root as "mercy seat." See Rom. 3:25, where the word is "propitiation." What did Christ say about the effectiveness of this man's prayer? Do repetitions and oratory have any place in effectual prayer? Matt. 6:5-8; Prov. 29:23. In what attitude should we constantly be? 1 Thess. 5:17. What is "justification" by faith through prayer?

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I sometimes perform actions or make visits on which I am unable to ask God's blessing? What is my attitude toward the majesty of God as well as His mercy when I kneel to pray? Do I make myself the center of my prayers?

"The prayer of the publican was heard because it showed dependence reaching forth to lay hold upon Omnipotence. Self to the publican appeared nothing but shame. Thus it must be seen by all who seek God."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 159.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 150, 151 (1923 ed., pages 151, 152).

Part 6
PETER—PHARISEE OR PUBLICAN?

Mark 14:27-29

"And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I."

Did the apostle Peter represent the attitude of the Pharisee or the publican in his protestations before the crucifixion? "For each of the classes represented by the Pharisee and the publican there is a lesson in the history of the apostle Peter."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 152.

To what instances in his life would you apply this statement? During his years with Christ Peter exhibited self-confidence. He thought he was quite able to meet any temptation or test which might come his way. What experience did he have that showed how inadequate his self-confidence was? Mark 14:66-72.

In what words does the apostle Paul warn us about the dangers of self-confidence? 1 Cor. 10:12. But Peter learned his lesson. His experience in the court of the high priest engraved the truth deeply on his heart, and he never again asserted himself or relied upon his own strength. What incident just before our Lord's ascension shows how well Peter had learned his lesson of trust in the Lord for strength? John 21:15-17.

"The once restless, boastful, self-confident disciple had become subdued and contrite. Henceforth he followed his Lord in self-denial and self-sacrifice."—*Ibid.,* p. 154. How did Jesus suggest to Peter that his victorious life might display daily service to needy human beings? Why did Peter have to wait for a terrible crisis before he learned his lesson? What aspects of Christ's character does His treatment of His self-confident disciple reveal?

THINK IT THROUGH

Is the subduing of self a daily business with me? Am I waiting for some future time or great crisis in which to display my discipleship, or am I daily doing my duty to Christ's sheep and lambs?

"It was through self-sufficiency that Peter fell; and it was through repentance and humiliation that his feet were again established. In the record of his experience every repenting sinner may find encouragement. Though Peter had grievously sinned, he was not forsaken. The words of Christ were written upon his soul, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Luke 22:32. In his bitter agony of remorse, this prayer, and the memory of Christ's look of love and pity, gave him hope."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 155, 156.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 151-163 (1923 ed., pages 152-165).

Part 7 ◇ **SUMMARY QUESTIONS** ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. On what previous occasion had Jesus taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer? _____

2. True or False? The man who went to his friend at midnight asking for bread, wanted it for his own use. _____

3. What characteristic was demonstrated by both the woman who went to the judge and the man who asked for bread? _____

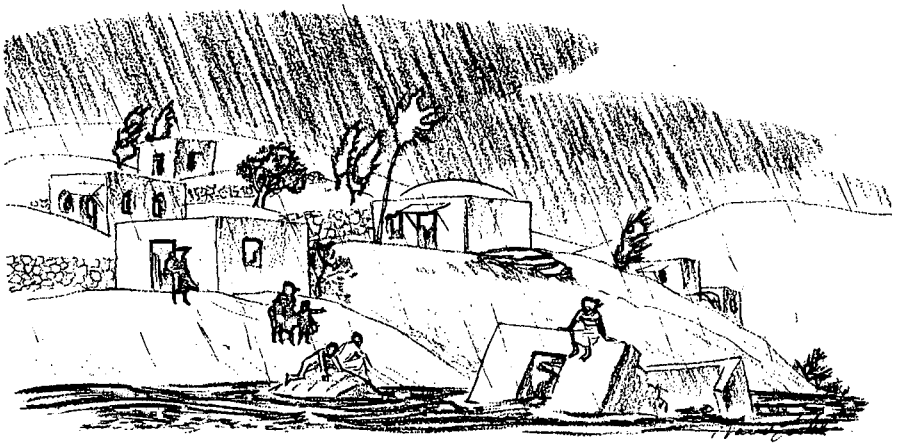
4. With whom did the Pharisee pray? _____

5. Of the two men who prayed in the temple, who was justified? _____

6. Name the apostle who in his early years as a disciple showed the characteristics of the praying Pharisee? _____

ANSWERS:

1. During the Sermon on the Mount. 2. False; he wanted it to give to others. 3. Importunity. 4. With himself. 5. The publican. 6. Peter.



COUNTING THE COST AND BUILDING WELL 9

"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. 5:3, 4.

Human nature, apart from the transforming grace of Christ, changes little from generation to generation. One illustration of this is that men always look for the easiest and quickest ways to do things, often with no long view of the permanent results of their plans. Desire for immediate profits and the struggle to gain what they want right now often lead to evil. Christ emphasized that preoccupation with the permanent and eternal rather than the immediate and transitory should characterize our lives. What He recommends in the stories we are to study is that we act from principle, carefully counting the cost and building well.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Permanent Foundations**
   Matt. 7:24, 25
2. **Shifting and Slippery**
   Matt. 7:26, 27
3. **Robes for Rags**
   Mark 2:21
4. **Old Bags and Holy Patches**
   Mark 2:22
5. **Building a Tower**
   Luke 14:25-30
6. **Children at Play**
   Luke 7:31-35

Part 1
PERMANENT FOUNDATIONS

Matt. 7:24, 25

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

What is the "wisdom" to which Christ refers? Is it possible to escape the responsibility of building some sort of character? To whom does the symbol "rock" point in the Scriptures? Deut. 32:4; 1 Cor. 10:4.

"Rock" is also representative of God's Word. His "Word" is both incarnate in Christ and inspired in the Bible. "The word of our God shall stand forever." Isa. 40:8. "The Word of God is the only steadfast thing our world knows. It is the sure foundation."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, page 148.

Christ's listeners knew well what Jesus was talking about when He contrasted the two kinds of houses—those built on sand, for in the valleys were many such, and others built on rock. The houses built upon rock were unmoved by the violent storms and floods that frequently visited the area of the lake of Galilee. Did the fact that the builders were sincere and meant well guarantee that they were safe from storm? What connection did Jesus make between hearing and doing? It was not as easy to build upon the rock as on the sands of the riverbeds, but it paid off in the end. So it may not be easy for us to build our characters upon Christ and His Word, but it pays! Who is the Master Architect? What materials should be used in character building? 1 Cor. 3:9-15.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I building my life on the sure foundation of Christ and His law and Word? Am I afraid of preparing the hard and difficult material for my character building?

"The great principles of the law, of the very nature of God, are embodied in the words of Christ on the mount. Whoever builds upon them is building upon Christ, the Rock of Ages. In receiving the Word, we receive Christ. And only those who thus receive His words are building upon Him. 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.' 1 Cor. 3:11. 'There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.' Acts 4:12. Christ, the Word, the revelation of God,—the manifestation of His character, His law, His love, His life,—is the only foundation upon which we can build a character that will endure."—"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 148, 149.

For deeper study: "Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 147-152 (1943 ed., pages 211-218).

Part 2
SHIFTING AND SLIPPERY

Matt. 7:26, 27

"And everyone that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Sand is shifting, easy to arrange, and apparently docile under our efforts. But it is unstable and easily moved again by someone else. It may be blown by the wind for miles. The man who built upon the sand was sincere but stupid. He wanted the easy and quick way. Is sincerity enough? We need sound common sense and true knowledge in building a character house which will survive the storms of life. Those who trust to themselves to earn salvation are building upon sand. What other illustrations of sandy foundations can you think of? What characters in the Bible thus built?

The man who built on sand was in danger from: overwhelming rainstorms which cause washouts and waterlogging of fields; floods (Satan is compared in the Scriptures to a flood—Isa. 59:19); raging winds (these represent strife and false doctrines —Eph. 4:14).

What sort of person does the Bible depict as a "fool"? Luke 24:25; 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14; Ps. 14:1. How did Christ say this foolish man reacted to the preaching of the Word? What materials does a fool build into his character? 1 Cor. 3:12, last part. What do these represent?

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I selected the only firm Foundation, or am I building on the shifting sands of self-dependence and human philosophy? Is my problem laziness which looks for the easy row to hoe?

"Every building erected on other foundation than God's Word will fall. He who, like the Jews in Christ's day, builds on the foundation of human ideas and opinions, of forms and ceremonies of man's invention, or on any works that he can do independently of the grace of Christ, is erecting his structure of character upon the shifting sand. The fierce tempests of temptation will sweep away the sandy foundation and leave his house a wreck on the shores of time."—"Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing," pages 150, 151.

For deeper study: "Patriarchs and Prophets," page 460; "The Desire of Ages," page 314.

Part 3
ROBES FOR RAGS
Mark 2:21

"No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse."

What were the two kinds of "garments" discussed in Gen. 3:7, 21? What do "garments" represent in the Scriptures and in this parable? Rev. 19:8. What is the cloth and where is it woven? Is it possible to repair old clothes with new cloth? Why does new cloth pull away from the old material and make the rent even worse? What meaning has this in spiritual things? Can I patch up my character by leaving some of my sinful ways and adding a few new patches? Why must there be completely new raiment? This parable shows us the need, not for trying to patch up the characters we have, but for obtaining new robes—the righteousness of Christ. Peter was continually endeavoring to patch up the old garments of his character. It was not until he accepted Christ's robe of righteousness in its entirety that he became a true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the functions of my garments? Do they only cover my nakedness, or do they make me attractive to others? Am I contenting myself with mere patchwork when I might obtain a whole new garment of righteousness for the asking? Should I be satisfied with rags when there are available to me the most beautiful robes?

"God makes no compromise with sin. A genuine conversion changes hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong. The religion of God is a firm fabric, composed of innumerable threads, and woven together with tact and skill. Only the wisdom which comes from God can make this fabric complete. There are a great many kinds of cloth which at first have a fine appearance, but they cannot endure the test. They wash out. The colors are not fast. Under the heat of summer they fade away and are lost. The cloth cannot endure rough handling.

"So it is with the religion of many. When the warp and woof of character will not stand the test of trial, the material of which it is composed is worthless. The efforts made to patch the old with a new piece do not better the condition of things; for the old, flimsy material breaks away from the new, leaving the rent much larger than before. Patching will not do. The only way is to discard the old garment altogether, and procure one entirely new."—Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 6, p. 1101.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," page 311 (1923 ed., page 318).

Part 4
OLD BAGS AND HOLY PATCHES
Mark 2:22

"No man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles."

Read also Ezek. 36:26.

Wine bottles were made from the skins of goats. After being stretched to their capacity they would harden with age. Then they could not be repaired with new skin patches. They were used also as containers for other liquids. What does the "new wine" represent? Luke 22:20.

The product of the crushed fruit of the true Vine illustrates certain aspects of our Saviour's mission. Can you add to these: the new teaching of the kingdom of God, righteousness by faith, the sacrifice of Calvary? Why cannot this new teaching be put into the old, rotten wineskins of our past lives and patterns of thought? New wine needs new wineskins. Where can you get these? John 3:3, 5.

Christ was not able to work through the Jewish leaders of His day—they were the old wine bottles—so He called upon those who had not been educated by the rabbis and were not members of the Sanhedrin to become educators for Him. "He could make them as new bottles for the new wine of His kingdom."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary,* Vol. 5, pp. 1088, 1089.

Animal skins were made into both garments and bottles. Compare and contrast the old garments with the old bottles, and the new garments and new bottles. What is the significance to you of the robes which covered and the bottles which contained?

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I cleared away all my old prejudices and concepts and allowed Christ to have full control of my heart and mind? Am I dominated by a desire to hold on to the outworn past?

"When God's people are one in the unity of the Spirit, all of Phariseeism, all of self-righteousness, which was the sin of the Jewish nation, will be expelled from all hearts. The mold of Christ will be upon each individual member of His body, and His people will be new bottles into which He can pour His new wine, and the new wine will not break the bottles. . . .

"Jesus came to impart to the human soul the Holy Spirit, by which the love of God is shed abroad in the heart; but it is impossible to endow men with the Holy Spirit, who are set in their ideas, whose doctrines are all stereotyped, and unchangeable, who are walking after the traditions and commandments of men, as were the Jews in the time of Christ."—"Selected Messages," Bk. 1, p. 386.

For deeper study: Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, pp. 1088, 1089.

Part 5
BUILDING A TOWER

Luke 14:28-30

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

Read also verses 25-27.

What did Jesus mean by a "tower"? Was it a place of defense, storage, lookout, or worship? 2 Sam. 22:3, 51; Prov. 18:10; Jer. 6:27; Hab. 2:1.

This parable shows us another problem that can bring discouragement and ruin—a failure to count the cost. This story was told during the last months of Christ's ministry. The Pharisees and scribes had rejected Christ and condemned all who followed Him. Some did not wish to incur their displeasure. But there were others who were carried forward by their own eagerness. They apparently wanted above all things to be followers of the Man who was different from any other leader they had known. Christ wanted to warn these that there was a price to be paid for discipleship, just as there is a price to be paid for every good thing that we enjoy. The price for success is energy, persistence, and wholehearted devotion. Can you add to this list? In what words did He hint at this? Luke 14:26, 27, 33.

This parable has an application to any practical undertaking, whether soul-winning projects or material buildings. Our faith and activity must be coupled with common sense.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I at times carried away by enthusiasm, or do I quietly sit down and count the cost of each of my enterprises? Do I consider the reputation of the great Master Builder should I fail? Is my problem a lack of mature forethought and reckless and impulsive activity?

"Let everyone take time to consider carefully; and not be like the man in the parable who began to build, and was not able to finish. Not a move should be made but that movement and all that it portends are carefully considered—everything weighed. . . .

"There may be individuals who will make a rush to do something, and enter into some business they know nothing about. This God does not require. Think candidly, prayerfully, studying the Word with all carefulness and prayerfulness, with mind and heart awake to hear the voice of God. . . . To understand the will of God is a great thing." —"Selected Messages," Bk. 2, p. 362.

For deeper study: "Evangelism," pages 362, 340.

Part 6
CHILDREN AT PLAY

"And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."

Luke 7:31-35

This parable has a lesson for those who are never satisfied with what is done for them. Christ had often observed children playing in the evening in the open areas of cities where the stalls of the market had been dismantled for the night. The fickle changeability of these young people was the point He brought out. Some led out in the game of weddings while others played funerals. The first cried, "Dance!" The second called out, "Weep!" The wedding players were disgruntled at those who would not play their game, while the funeral players felt the same about the wedding children. "If you don't do what I want, I won't play with you!" is the attitude depicted.

Christ compared the solemn message of the Baptist with the "funeral" players, while His own happier messages were likened to the "wedding." The people had responded to neither approach except by criticism. Few seemed genuinely satisfied. His age was a childish, unreasonable one. John, many felt, lacked the gentle, human touch. And Christ, they thought, went to unnecessary extremes to be friendly with sinners! Do not listen to either leader, they urged. Our generation, too, Jesus might observe, is like a group of petulent, unpredictable children.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I ever childishly say, "If you don't— I won't play with you!"? Do I always want my own way? Am I fickle or steady, petulant or reasonable?

"The sinner must be led to look to Calvary; with the simple faith of a little child he must trust in the merits of the Saviour, accepting His righteousness, believing in His mercy."—"Gospel Workers," pages 156, 157.

"If you will sincerely humble your hearts before Him, empty your souls of self-esteem, and put away the natural defects of your character, and overcome your love of supremacy, and come to God as little children, He will bestow on you His Holy Spirit."—"Testimonies to Ministers," page 323.

For deeper study: Consider Solomon's prayer: 1 Kings 3:5-15.

Part 7 ◇ **SUMMARY QUESTIONS** ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Who is the wise man who builds his house upon the rock? _____

2. Who is the foolish man who builds his house upon the sand? _____

3. What does the new cloth used to patch an old garment do to it? _____

4. Finish this sentence: Christ said that putting new wine into old bottles would _____.

5. Fill in the missing words: "Whosoever doth not _____ his _____, and come after me, cannot be my _____."

6. Which is correct? Jesus likens this generation to (*a*) children playing in the marketplace, bidding for attention, (*b*) children competing against each other? _____

ANSWERS:

1. The one who hears and does Christ's bidding, 2. The one who hears Christ's sayings, but does not do them. 3. Tears away from it. 4. Burst the bottles. 5. Bear, cross, disciple. 6. a.

VIGIL AT MIDNIGHT 10

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." Mark 13:35, 36.

The Bible presents in many ways the truth that constant vigilance is the price all must pay in order to escape the attacks of the enemy of souls and attain to final victory. Christ Himself told several stories to emphasize different aspects of this vital truth. In the parables which we shall study this week two main relationships are indicated. The first deals with that relationship which exists between a faithful servant and his trusting master. The second has to do with that relationship entered into by willing volunteers, and is illustrated by bridal attendants at a wedding. In the first, service is paid for. In the other, all service is rendered joyfully and freely. The emphasis is on the point that we must be faithful right up to the end, vigilant and prepared to serve when called upon.

Late, late, so late! but we can enter still. . . .
No light had we; for that we do repent;
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now. . . .
Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O let us in, though late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.
—Alfred, Lord Tennyson,
"The Poet's Life of Christ."

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Watchful Servants**
   Mark 13:32-34
2. **What Time Is It?**
   Luke 12:35-40
3. **Religion Like a Wedding**
   Matt. 25:1-4
4. **Cry at Midnight**
   Matt. 25:5-7
5. **Oh, We Meant Well!**
   Matt. 25:8, 9
6. **What! Too Late?**
   Matt. 25:10-13

Part 1
WATCHFUL SERVANTS

Mark 13:32-34

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

What does Christ say about the day and the hour of His coming? Matt. 24:36. Jesus here repeats the warning that no one except the Father in heaven knows the exact time of His coming; therefore it behooves all to be prepared constantly. Does this suggest that Christ Himself does not know the time of His advent? Is it wise, then, for us to try to predict this event? At what period did all "time prophecies" come to their end? Rev. 10:6, last part.

The "far journey" undertaken by the man in the parable is Christ's return to His home in heaven. What is the "house" that the man in the parable leaves to the care of his servants? The authority Christ invested in the "servants" is the power of the gospel, the message of salvation.

Everyone has been assigned his own task. The "porter" is commanded to watch. The emphasis is on watchfulness in this parable. The word "watch" occurs three times. What blessing is pronounced on those who are watchful? Luke 12:37. How may we keep awake? Our waiting for the Lord of the household is not to be idle waiting. Each is to do his appointed work. What do you understand by "suddenly"?

THINK IT THROUGH

By my occupation, my choices, my interests, am I showing that I am constantly on the watch? Against what in my life should I personally be on guard?

"Because we know not the exact time of His coming, we are commanded to watch. 'Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.' Luke 12:37. Those who watch for the Lord's coming are not waiting in idle expectancy. The expectation of Christ's coming is to make men fear the Lord, and fear His judgments upon transgression. It is to awaken them to the great sin of rejecting His offers of mercy. Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working."—"The Desire of Ages," page 634.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 635, 636.

Part 2
WHAT TIME IS IT?

Luke 12:35-37

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them."

Read also verses 38-40.

How did Christ express the Father's great desire for His children? Luke 12:32. What is suggested by "loins"? 1 Peter 1:13. How may they be "girded"? See *Patriarchs and Prophets,* page 460. What are our "lights"? Prov. 20:27. How may they grow dim? See *Testimonies for the Church,* Vol. 4, pp. 123, 124.

God's longing for His children to inherit the kingdom will do no good unless they, for their part, also want it with all their hearts. And this desire must include constant vigilance. "The Lord intimates a delay before the morning finally dawns. But He would not have them give way to weariness, nor relax their earnest watchfulness, because the morning does not open upon them as soon as they expected."—*Testimonies,* Vol. 2, p. 192.

Three "watches" are mentioned in the parable. Understandably it is easy to be watchful in the first watch, but watchfulness has a tendency to slacken off as time goes by and the second watch passes into the third. But "the third watch calls for threefold earnestness. To become impatient now would be to lose all our earnest, persevering watching heretofore. The long night of gloom is trying; but the morning is deferred in mercy, because if the Master should come, so many would be found unready."—*Ibid.,* p. 194.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I allowing my vigilance to slacken as the time goes by, or am I more alert as the advent seems delayed? In what ways may I allow my light to grow dim?

"The desire of our Lord is that we should be watching, so that when He cometh and knocketh we may open to Him immediately. A blessing is pronounced upon those servants whom He finds watching. 'He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.' Who among us in these last days will be thus specially honored by the Master of assemblies? Are we prepared without delay to open to Him immediately and welcome Him in? Watch, watch, watch. Nearly all have ceased their watching and waiting; we are not ready to open to Him immediately." —"Testimonies," Vol. 2, p. 195.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 634, 635.

Part 3
RELIGION LIKE A WEDDING

Matt. 25:1-4

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

Christ and the disciples were seated on the Mount of Olives when He told this parable. Christ had just concluded Matthew 24. "Then" ties the two chapters together. Looking toward the city, they could see a house all lighted up, with people gathered expectantly, waiting for a marriage procession to begin. It was the custom for the bridegroom with his friends (Matt. 9:15; John 3:29) to leave his home and go to meet his bride and bring her to his home, accompanied by her attendants and relatives and friends. See Ps. 45:14, 15.

"The two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 406. See Rev. 14:4; 2 Cor. 11:2.

What does the "lamp" represent? Ps. 119:105. What two aspects of Christ's mission is portrayed by the *coming* of the *bridegroom?* To what periods do the double applications of this parable apply? What precautions (2 Peter 1:5-8) did the "wise" virgins take that the "foolish" ones did not (2 Peter 1:9)? "Oil" in the Scriptures is often used as a symbol of certain aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Can you list some? Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9; 1 John 2:20, 27. We find a special use in Zechariah 4. What does "vessel" signify?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I guilty of the same foolishness as demonstrated by the five unthoughtful virgins? What may I do to awaken? What are my feelings and reactions to the teaching of the advent?

"The parable of the ten virgins of Matthew 25 also illustrates the experience of the Adventist people. In Matthew 24, in answer to the question of His disciples concerning the sign of His coming and of the end of the world, Christ had pointed out some of the most important events in the history of the world and of the church from His first to His second advent; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, the great tribulation of the church under the pagan and papal persecutions, the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars. After this He spoke of His coming in His kingdom, and related the parable describing the two classes of servants who look for His appearing." —"The Great Controversy," page 393.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 405-408 (1923 ed., pages 415-417).

Part 4
CRY AT MIDNIGHT

Matt. 25:5-7

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps."

The bridegroom seemed to be delayed in his journey to the home of the bride; and as the hour grew late, the bridal party and guests began to fall asleep. To what spiritual conditions do "slumber" and "sleep" point?

Then at midnight one who was watching raised the cry, "The bridegroom cometh!" "Cometh" is a supplied word in the text. We are to look to Jesus. His advent will fit into place. Immediately all were wakened.

This is a twofold picture of the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom. The first points to His coming to the sanctuary (Dan. 7:10, 13, 14) to determine who will constitute the bridal party. His second advent also is portrayed. The first cry "Behold the Bridegroom" went out in 1844. The second is now! We should notice that "the coming of the bridegroom was at midnight—the darkest hour. So the coming of Christ will take place in the darkest period of this earth's history."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 414.

How may I gain a better appreciation of God? Will the message of Rev. 14:6, 7 help? What condition of the church is represented by the foolish virgins? Rev. 3:15-18. "The state of the church represented by the foolish virgins is also spoken of as the Laodicean state."—Ellen G. White, in *The Review and Herald,* Aug. 19, 1890.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I being engulfed by the darkness of unbelief and superstition around me, or am I a light in my neighborhood? Do I have sufficient "oil" for the journey?

"The days of Noah and Lot pictured the condition of the world just before the coming of the Son of man. The Scriptures pointing forward to this time declare that Satan will work with all power and 'with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.' 2 Thess. 2:9, 10. His working is plainly revealed by the rapidly increasing darkness, the multitudinous errors, heresies, and delusions of these last days. Not only is Satan leading the world captive, but his deceptions are leavening the professed churches of our Lord Jesus Christ. The great apostasy will develop into darkness deep as midnight, impenetrable as sackcloth of hair. To God's people it will be a night of trial, a night of weeping, a night of persecution for the truth's sake. But out of that night of darkness God's light will shine."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 414, 415.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 408-412 (1923 ed., pages 418-420); "The Great Controversy," page 426.

Part 5
OH, WE MEANT WELL!

Matt. 25:8, 9

"And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

Why was there no problem for the five wise virgins? When had they taken the precaution of buying oil to replenish their lamps? Where had they obtained this? The foolish girls cried out, "Our lamps are *going out!*" (Greek). Where only could they go to find oil? Zech. 4:6, 11-14.

In their predicament what did the five foolish virgins seek to get from the others? Why could not the wise virgins comply with the request and share their "oil"? The reply, "Not so!" is abrupt and final. What did they suggest that the young women should do?

The "oil" also represents the character developed by the indwelling Spirit. One person cannot develop character for another. What does the Bible teach about the impossibility of transferring human goodness from one to another? Ezek. 14:14, 20; Jer. 15:1. To what occasions does this message apply? "Character is not transferable. No man can believe for another. No man can receive the Spirit for another. No man can impart to another the character which is the fruit of the Spirit's working."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 412.

In what ways *did* Moses, Samuel, Noah, Daniel, Job, each in his generation help to save his fellows?

THINK IT THROUGH

Through careful Bible study and submission to the molding of the Spirit day by day am I building a character that Christ will accept in His kingdom? Or am I hopefully relying on others to discipline me in worship and in Bible study?

"It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,' and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation. So now, a sudden and unlooked-for calamity, something that brings the soul face to face with death, will show whether there is any real faith in the promises of God. It will show whether the soul is sustained by grace. The great final test comes at the close of human probation, when it will be too late for the soul's need to be supplied."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 412.

For deeper study: Ellen G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1099.

Part 6
WHAT! TOO LATE?

Matt. 25:10-13

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Read also Luke 13:26, 27.

The foolish set out on a vain mission to buy oil. This suggests that it will be useless and too late to try to develop a godlike character through a sudden burst of Bible study to obtain the oil of the Spirit after the close of probation. While they were gone, the bridegroom came, and the procession made its way back to his home. By the time the five foolish virgins returned, the ready ones had gone inside and the door was shut. The foolish girls were too late!

What two periods of church history are portrayed by all this? In what ways did the movement of 1844, the first angel's message, fulfill this part of the parabolic prophecy? How will the end, the third angel's message and its rejection, fulfill it? What is the "door," and what is meant by "the shut door"? What were the foolish ones told, when they pleaded to be admitted? Luke 13:24-30.

"Saddest of all words that ever fell on mortal ear are those words of doom, 'I know you not.' The fellowship of the Spirit, which you have slighted, could alone make you one with the joyous throng at the marriage feast. In that scene you cannot participate. Its light would fall on blinded eyes, its melody upon deaf ears. Its love and joy could awake no chord of gladness in the world-benumbed heart. You are shut out from heaven by your own unfitness for its companionship."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 413.

Who is pictured by "the door"? John 10:7. How permanent is this exclusion? What will those who have not redeemed the time and built characters worthy of heaven have said to them? Matt. 7:22, 23.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I value the time given me before the end of my probation to prepare a character for eternity? Am I allowing any earthly considerations to absorb my attention and keep me unprepared?

"We cannot be ready to meet the Lord by waking when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the Bridegroom!' and then gathering up our empty lamps to have them replenished. We cannot keep Christ apart from our lives here, and yet be fitted for His companionship in heaven.

"In the parable the wise virgins had oil in their vessels with their lamps. Their light burned with undimmed flame through the night of watching."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 413, 414.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 412-421 (1923 ed., pages 421-431).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. When the Son of man took his "far journey," what did He give to each of His servants? _____

2. What is meant by having one's loins girded about? _____

3. What was the difference between what the wise virgins had with them and what the foolish ones took? _____

4. Of what is "midnight" a symbol? _____

5. True or False: When the five foolish virgins asked for oil, the five wise ones refused them and told them to ask others for some. _____

6. With what were the five foolish virgins confronted when they arrived at the house of the bridegroom? _____

ANSWERS:

1. He gave each some work to do. 2. Being in a state of preparedness. 3. Extra oil in their vessels. 4. The darkest period in history. 5. False; they told them to buy for themselves. 6. A shut door.

DAY OF RECKONING 11

"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Luke 16:13.

It is true in the physical as well as the spiritual life that every seed brings forth its appropriate harvest. This obvious and inescapable fact is difficult of acceptance by many. Especially do some young people feel that it will be different for them! Others may have had to face up to the consequences of their decisions and activities; but, they think, somehow things will turn out differently. They will be able to get away with their misdeeds in the end. Everything will, in the final accounting, work to their advantage.

Christ used several parables to teach the inescapable truth that at the end of the road of life there comes a day of reckoning. Its findings ought not to prove surprising to anyone, for the fruit of the life will depend precisely upon the kind of seed sown and the care given to the development of the plant. Our Saviour often repeated His lessons against hypocrisy and self-justification. As we study the stories He told, let us continually ask ourselves, Am I allowing the principles of the kingdom to regulate my life as I move toward the showdown at sunset?

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **All or Nothing**
   Luke 16:13-21
2. **Shocked by Hell**
   Luke 16:22-26
3. **No Second Chance**
   Luke 16:27-31
4. **Thanks for Nothing**
   Luke 17:5-10
5. **Stupid Millionaire**
   Luke 12:16-21
6. **Weather Vane**
   Mark 13:28, 29

Part 1
ALL OR NOTHING

Luke 16:19-21

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores."

Read verses 13-18.

Against how many Pharisaic characteristics did Christ direct this parable of the rich man and Lazarus? It is one of the least understood of all His stories. Yet it is rich in meaning for us today. In it Christ contrasts two men who lived at different levels of wealth and social position here on earth.

Through the parable Christ teaches that it is impossible for men to secure the salvation of the soul after death, and that every man is given sufficient light for the discharge of the duties required of him.

The Pharisees despised what they considered to be Christ's excesses; but their own covetous unbelief they ignored. To show them that if a man rejected light on earth he might be surprised by the hereafter, Jesus told this parable.

What significance do you see in the various advantages the rich man possessed? Does he represent the Jewish nation? They, like the rich man, were decked in the "purple" of royalty and the "fine linen" of the priesthood. He lived in "jovial splendor" (liberal translation of "sumptuously") daily. The Jews believed that material prosperity was an index of divine blessing and spiritual power.

Is there anything revealed by Christ to condemn this rich man? Was he kind for tolerating the beggar near his home? Is indifference to want a sin?

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I tempted to say when I am prosperous materially, "The Lord has blessed me"? or to think when times are hard, "I wonder why the Lord has not blessed me"? Are material conditions necessarily evidence of Heaven's blessings?

"This parable draws a contrast between the rich who have not made God their dependence, and the poor who have made God their dependence. Christ shows that the time is coming when the position of the two classes will be reversed. Those who are poor in this world's goods, yet who trust in God and are patient in suffering, will one day be exalted above those who now hold the highest positions the world can give but who have not surrendered their life to God."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 260.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 261, 262 (1923 ed., pages 262, 263).

Part 2
SHOCKED BY HELL

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

Luke 16:22-26

The Saviour used a belief widely held among the Jews to teach a lesson. "In this parable Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ's words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 263.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Abraham's bosom was the place where the just were taken after death to await eternal life in heaven.

To whom did the rich man pray? Why not to God? He evidently felt that being a child of Abraham was more important than being a child of God! But Lazarus could not help the rich man. The Jews pictured a "great gulf" between "Abraham's bosom" and Hades, which separated Lazarus from the rich man. Jesus desires us to learn from this that it is only in this life that we have probation. There is no further chance after death.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I tempted to think that selfish pleasure and enjoyment is the sum of happiness? Was the rich man's cry for help in his desperate situation genuine? Am I inclined to turn to God in a crisis and to forget Him when all goes well?

"Christ desires His hearers to understand that it is impossible for man to secure the salvation of the soul after death. . . . This life is the only time given to man in which to prepare for eternity."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 263.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 263, 264 (1923 ed., pages 264, 265).

Part 3
NO SECOND CHANCE

Luke 16:27-31

"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Realizing the mistake in being callous toward the poor and suffering during his lifetime, and of justifying his conduct, the rich man wanted his brothers to be warned not to follow in his footsteps and receive the fate he had received. Abraham said, "Son, remember." We either remember in time to correct our mistakes; or, when it is too late, we remember in fear and remorse.

"Abraham in his answer to this request is represented as saying, Your brothers have been sufficiently warned. Light has been given them, but they would not see; truth has been presented to them, but they would not hear."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 264, 265.

The message is clear: if we do not accept present light, we shut off the source of future light. The Jews asked for some spectacular sign or evidence, but they rejected even the resurrection of the real Lazarus later on. We have ample evidence in the inspired writings. Let us take heed to it.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I allowing prejudice to keep me from accepting all the light of this message? If I refuse to study and follow the Scriptures, will I ever yield to other evidence? Am I expecting some spectacular revelation?

"The conversation between Abraham and the once-rich man is figurative. The lesson to be gathered from it is that every man is given sufficient light for the discharge of the duties required of him. Man's responsibilities are proportionate to his opportunities and privileges. God gives to everyone sufficient light and grace to do the work He has given him to do. If man fails to do that which a little light shows to be his duty, greater light would only reveal unfaithfulness, neglect to improve the blessings given."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 265.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 264-271 (1923 ed., pages 265-272).

Part 4
THANKS FOR NOTHING

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Luke 17:5-10

As the Twelve listened to Christ's challenging message, they doubted the effectiveness of their spiritual powers and prayed for an increase of faith. Theirs is a magnificent request we should make daily.

Christ divided His answer to His disciples into two parts. The first had to do with the amount and source of their faith. The second covered the motive of service which was exhibited in the exercise of their faith.

The heavenly seed contains the life principle which is capable of vast and unpredictable results. What is the relationship in which God purposes our faith shall be energized? Rom. 10:17. Did the size of the seed used as an illustration (the mustard seed is among the smallest) indicate that the disciples needed more faith or a better understanding of their own worth?

"Those who labor wholeheartedly in the Lord's vineyard, working to the utmost of their ability, are not the ones to set the highest estimate on their own services. Instead of swelling with pride and self-importance, and measuring with exactness every hour's work, they compare their efforts with the Saviour's work and account themselves unprofitable servants."—*Testimonies,* Vol. 7, p. 209.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I depending on good works to save me? If good works will not save me, why should I bother about working?

"Our good works alone will not save any of us, but we cannot be saved without good works. And after we have done all that we can do, in the name and strength of Jesus we are to say: 'We are unprofitable servants.' We are not to think that we have made great sacrifices and that we should receive great reward for our feeble services."—"Testimonies," Vol. 4, p. 228.

For deeper study: "Testimonies," Vol. 3, p. 526.

Part 5
STUPID MILLIONAIRE

"And He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Luke 12:16-21

What occasioned the telling of this parable? Luke 12:13, 14. How did Jesus reply to the man's request? Verse 15. What factors do you think kept the two brothers from solving their own problem? Christ's warning includes *all* covetousness. Why did Christ not assume any responsibilities as an arbitrator in settling business squabbles? Is this an example to the church in religious matters? Compare John 8:3-11; Matt. 22:17-21.

What has the parable of the rich man to say of the folly of making worldly possessions the be-all and end-all of life? What is the significance of Christ's word "things"? What does Jesus tell us about the man that indicates the man's intelligence?

As the wealthy farmer harvested his good crops and surveyed his gains, what far-reaching plans did he make? Was there anything wrong about such plans since there is no suggestion that he made his gains by fraudulent means? But what was basically wrong with him and his schemes? See Eccl. 5:10. Had he forgotten the demands of Christian stewardship? In the eyes of the world he was probably a sensible man, but see Job 27:8. What is said, however, of the wisdom of the world? 1 Cor. 3:19. How does the Bible characterize a fool? Ps. 14:1. A fool is one who leaves God out of his reckoning, as this man left God out of his plans for the future. See Prov. 12:15.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I right in saying, "My soul," or does it belong to God? Is God in all my plans, or am I laying up treasure on earth instead of in heaven?

"This man's aims were no higher than those of the beasts that perish. He lived as if there were no God, no heaven, no future life; as if everything he possessed were his own, and he owed nothing to God or man."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 257, 258.

Part 6
WEATHER VANE

Mark 13:28, 29

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors."

This short parable was given when Christ was answering the question of the disciples concerning the signs by which they and we would be able to recognize the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. What expression did Luke add (Luke 21:29) to show that while Christ emphasized the fig tree, He also included others? Fig trees abound in the Holy Land, and Christ's listeners were familiar with the sight of buds forming on the fig tree—heralds of the approach of summer. What did Jesus mean by the phrase, "Ye see and know of your own selves"? Luke 21:30. As we welcome signs of summer in the natural world, so we are to analyze Christ's clues in the world around us as given in Matthew 24, Mark 14, and Luke 21, as signs of the summertime of the earth when Christ will appear.

On what do these "signs" focus? Matt. 24:33, margin. "We are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The Lord is at the door. There is soon to open before us a period of overwhelming interest to all living. The controversies of the past are to be revived; new controversies will arise. The scenes to be enacted in our world are not yet even dreamed of. Satan is at work through human agencies. . . . A crisis is just upon us.

"But God's servants are not to trust to themselves in this great emergency. . . . The program of coming events is in the hands of the Lord. The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of His church, in His own charge."—*Testimonies,* Vol. 5, p. 753. The budding fig tree and all trees have a message, which is to help us prepare for the summer harvest of this world.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I using the preparation techniques of the Master Gardener so as to bring forth much fruit? Am I satisfied merely with budding and leafing? Do I discern the signs of coming judgment? Do I believe He—Christ—is near?

"Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's coming is at hand. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away,' He says, 'but My words shall not pass away.' "—"The Desire of Ages," page 632.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. What evidences of wealth did the rich man in the parable have? _____

_____.

2. Which of these three patriarchs did the rich man call on for mercy? Isaac, Abraham, Jacob? _____.

3. What was the rich man's request? _____

_____.

4. What is expected of servants? _____

_____.

5. For whom alone did the rich man make plans? _____

6. What sign of the approach of summer did Christ refer to in telling us to be alert for the signs of His coming? _____.

ANSWERS:

1. He was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared well. 2. Abraham. 3. That Lazarus be sent to warn his five brothers still living. 4. That they serve expecting nothing more than their just pay. 5. For himself. 6. The fig tree putting forth its leaves.

FINAL DECISION 12

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Eccl. 12:1.

A small airplane with limited fuel supply flying across the ocean reaches a critical position known as the point of no return. At that juncture the pilot no longer has sufficient fuel to return to the shore he left behind; his only hope is to proceed to the distant shore ahead. The parables we shall study this week take to its logical conclusion the line of thought we considered last week—that the course of life each man chooses to follow determines his ultimate destination. Each individual comes to a point of no return in his personal experience; this is the close of his probation. Up to this point each one has navigated his course by his daily decisions. His direction is determined, not by isolated acts either good or bad, but by the general tendency of his life.

Each man is invited to steer his craft to the heavenly shore. The Master furnishes all the necessary equipment for a safe crossing. But the actual setting of the course depends on individual choice.

The parables in this week's study have to do with feasts—not airplanes. But the elements of choice and proper preparation loom large. Excuses for poor choice avail nothing. Improper preparation brings disaster. Consider carefully the factors which bring all of us to our individual points of no return.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Banquet Without Guests**
   Luke 14:16-20
2. **Substitute Invitations**
   Luke 14:21-24
3. **The Status Symbol**
   Luke 14:7-10
4. **The Best Man**
   Mark 2:18, 19
5. **Too Late to Change**
   Matthew 22:2-7
6. **What! No Proper Clothes?**
   Matthew 22:11-14

Part 1
BANQUET WITHOUT GUESTS

Luke 14:16-20

"Then said He unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at suppertime to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

Christ told this parable while He was a guest at a feast in the home of a Pharisee. What is the significance of the phrases, "They watched Him," and He "marked" them? Luke 14:1, 7. He desired to show the Jews that God's mercy was extended to the Gentiles as well as to them, and also to point out that by their attitude they were slighting the gospel invitation. What lesson in true hospitality had been given to Israel of old? Deut. 14:29.

How many are included in the invitation? What period of world history is suggested by the term "at suppertime"? Who are the "servants" who should repeat the invitation?

"None of the excuses were founded on a real necessity. The man who 'must needs go and see' his piece of ground, had already purchased it. His haste to go and see it was due to the fact that his interest was absorbed in his purchase. The oxen, too, had been bought. The proving of them was only to satisfy the interest of the buyer. The third excuse had no more semblance of reason. The fact that the intended guest had married a wife need not have prevented his presence at the feast. His wife also would have been made welcome."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 222.

The excuses made by the guests in the parable are still being made today. They represent, first, those who are absorbed by their possessions; then, those who put their business first; and, last, those who allow their relatives to stand in the way of their fully accepting the gospel.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I adept at making excuses to avoid the gospel call and the invitation to take part in the Lord's service? Which of these three is my excuse? Is there any reason whatever why an excuse for declining Heaven's invitation is ever justifiable?

"By the great supper, Christ represents the blessings offered through the gospel. The provision is nothing less than Christ Himself. He is the bread that comes down from heaven; and from Him the streams of salvation flow."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 222.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 219-225 (1923 ed., pages 223-229).

Part 2
SUBSTITUTE INVITATIONS

"So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Luke 14:21-24

How did the giver of the feast react when the servant brought back his report? Whom did he then tell his servant to invite? Who did the first invited guests represent? In what ways did they react to the gospel invitation? What did Jesus mean by the "streets and lanes of the city"? What is further suggested by the terms "highways and hedges"? What did Christ indicate by "my house"? By the "poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind" are represented those whom the Jewish leaders despised, the common people of the land. Why do men still take this attitude?

Since there were still places, after these had been brought in, what did the giver of the feast tell his servant to do? Those in the highways and hedges represent the ones outside the Jewish nation. Christ stresses here that the "good news" was to go to the Gentile world. To what extent is the gospel invitation now to be given? Rev. 14:6.

"None of those men" points to so-called noble and wise men, not to mankind in general. To what supper will these "mighty men" be invited? Rev. 19:17, 18.

THINK IT THROUGH

What do I learn of God's character through His repeated invitations? What do I understand is the "anger" of God? Should it ever be compared with the anger of man?

"The gospel invitation is to be given to all the world—'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.' Rev. 14:6. The last message of warning and mercy is to lighten the whole earth with its glory. It is to reach all classes of men, rich and poor, high and low. 'Go out into the highways and hedges,' Christ says, 'and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled.' "—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 228.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 225-237 (1923 ed., pages 229-241).

Part 3
THE STATUS SYMBOL

"And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee."

Luke 14:7-10

This story reminds us of the way in which the disciples contended about who should have the best places at the Last Supper. Luke 22:24-27; compare Mark 9:33-37. Jesus must have often noted how this question of pride and protocol occupied the minds of the people. The most important seats at a feast were typical of various status symbols men cherish. But Christ sought to show that we obtain honor not by seeking high places, but by being willing to take the lowliest place and to do the humblest tasks.

What did Jesus teach about true greatness? Matt. 23:11, 12. What illustration did He select to emphasize His lesson? Matt. 18:1-4.

"The principle here enunciated strikes at the very root of pride, the desire to exalt oneself in the opinion of others; and pride, in turn, along with selfishness, is the root of all sin. Jesus Himself set the supreme example of humility (see Isa. 52:13, 14; Phil. 2:6-10)."—*SDA Bible Commentary,* on Luke 14:11.

THINK IT THROUGH

What conclusion did Jesus draw? Luke 14:11. How do I feel when someone I know gets a better job or a raise in pay? Am I always comparing another's good fortune with my own conditions in life?

"The followers of Jesus will not be popular, but will be like their Master, meek and lowly of heart. You are seeking to climb to the highest seat, but will find yourselves at last in the lowest. If you seek to deal justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God, you will be partakers with Christ of His sufferings and sharers with Him of His glory in His kingdom. The Lord has blessed you, but how little have you appreciated His loving-kindness!"—"Testimonies," Vol. 5, p. 502.

For deeper study: "The Ministry of Healing," page 477.

Part 4
THE BEST MAN

Mark 2:18, 19

"And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto Him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast."

Christ's willingness to eat even at the homes of publicans and sinners caused no small stir among those who considered themselves more righteous. The Pharisees, as part of their requirements, fasted regularly, some of them even on two days a week. But Jesus and His disciples appeared to disregard this custom entirely. When John's disciples asked the reason why, how did Christ reply? Compare Matt. 9:14, 15. What is the true fast commanded by the Scriptures? Isa. 58:6, 7.

"Here is set forth the very spirit and character of the work of Christ. His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew's feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliaton and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man." —*The Desire of Ages*, page 278.

Who is the "Bridegroom"? What is the difference between the "bride" and "the children of the bridechamber"?

THINK IT THROUGH

What modern day applications do I find in God's recommendation to "fast"? Does this mean going without food for the body or going without "food" for the ego and the carnal nature?

"When they should see their Lord betrayed and crucified, the disciples would mourn and fast. In His last words to them in the upper chamber, He said, 'A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me. Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' John 16:19, 20."—"The Desire of Ages," page 277.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 276-278.

Part 5
TOO LATE TO CHANGE

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."

Matt. 22:2-7

Who are represented by the "king" and the "son"? When will this "marriage" take place? Who is the Bridegroom? and the bride? What actually is the marriage? Has this any meaning for us today? What second invitation was sent out? Matt. 22:8-10.

"In this parable, as that of the great supper, are illustrated the gospel invitation, its rejection by the Jewish people, and the call of mercy to the Gentiles."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 307.

Athough similar to the parable of the great supper, this story teaches different truths. Like the former, it illustrated the rejection of the gospel invitation by the Jews and the giving of the invitation to the Gentiles. "This was the message borne to the Jewish nation after the crucifixion of Christ; but the nation that claimed to be God's peculiar people rejected the gospel brought to them in the power of the Holy Spirit." —*Ibid.*, p. 308.

How did those invited to the wedding treat God's servants sent out to tell them that everything was ready?

THINK IT THROUGH

Can I show any more intense rebellion than by making excuses? How do I treat the messengers of truth, both dead and living? Do I welcome them and their message?

"The spiritual banquet has been set before us in rich abundance. We have had presented to us by the messengers of God the richest feast—the righteousness of Christ, justification by faith, the exceeding great and precious promises of God in His Word, free access to the Father by Jesus Christ, the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and the well-grounded assurance of eternal life in the kingdom of God. We ask, What could God do for us that He has not done in preparing the great supper, the heavenly banquet?"—E. G. White Comments, "SDA Bible Commentary," Vol. 5, p. 1097.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 307, 308 (1923 ed., pages 313, 314).

Part 6
WHAT! NO PROPER CLOTHES?

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matt. 22:11-14

What group is represented by the guests? "The guests at the gospel feast are those who profess to serve God, those whose names are written in the book of life."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 310.

What do we understand by the examination of the guests conducted by the king? When does this take place? "By the king's examination of the guests at the feast is represented a work of judgment."—*Ibid.*

What is meant by the "robe"? Rev. 19:8. "By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess."—*Ibid.*

Where only can this garment of righteousness be obtained? Rev. 3:18. In Eastern weddings the garment was provided by the king. Whom did the king notice among the guests? "But one man was clothed in his common citizen dress. He had refused to make the preparation required by the king. The garment provided for him at great cost he disdained to wear." —*Ibid.*, p. 309.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I postponing obtaining the garment of righteousness provided by my heavenly King, or do I think my own robes of self-righteousness are good enough? Is there any chance to change clothes once the King comes?

"The guests at the marriage feast were inspected by the king. Only those were accepted who had obeyed his requirements and put on the wedding garment. So it is with the guests at the gospel feast. All must pass the scrutiny of the great King, and only those are received who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 312.

"The man who came to the feast without a wedding garment represents the condition of many in our world today. They profess to be Christians, and lay claim to the blessings and privileges of the gospel; yet they feel no need of a transformation of character." —"Ibid.," p. 315.

"There will be no future probation in which to prepare for eternity. It is in this life that we are to put on the robe of Christ's righteousness. This is our only opportunity to form characters for the home which Christ has made ready for those who obey His commandments,"—"Ibid.," p. 319.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 308-319 (1923 ed., pages 315-325).

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Underline the description of the guest who did not ask to be excused: (a) the one who had bought a piece of land, (b) the one who had bought five yoke of oxen, (c) the one who had married a wife.

2. How many times were the servants of the man who arranged a feast sent out with invitations? _____

3. At a certain feast Jesus attended what did he "mark"? _____

4. With what question did the disciples of John go to Jesus one day? _____

_____

5. How did the invited guests of the king treat the servants sent to summon them? _____

6. What was the reaction of the guest without a wedding garment when he was asked for a reason? _____

ANSWERS:

1. c. 2. Three times. 3. How people chose the best places. 4. "Why do the disciples of John fast, but Thy disciples fast not?" 5. Spitefully killing them. 6. He was speechless.

THE PAYOFF 13

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Eccl. 12:13, 14.

During the last week of this quarter we shall think of the final "payoff" of Christian living. We are well aware that every business is started in the hope of ultimate reward. Time, effort, energy, and capital are all expended to achieve this one goal. When there are no favorable results, the venture fails. In the kingdom of God there are also investments. God has given His Son and with Him every needed resource of heaven—grace, power, the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of angels. The disciple has also invested his all—time, energy, motives, and ambitions. Satan has set and sprung many a booby trap. Life's decisions have become permanent, and the Christian reaches the point of no return. Then God will arraign all before the judgment bar of Christ to be judged according to the deeds done in this life. Those who have rejected the proffered aid of Heaven and have chosen their own way will be condemned to perish. Those who have submitted to their Lord and allowed Him to regulate their lives in service to their fellows and worship to Him will be justified and rewarded with eternal life. Let us study these matchless stories as mirrors of our lives.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **Subject to Inspection**
   Matt. 13:47-50
2. **The Investors**
   Matt. 25:14-23
3. **The Audit**
   Matt. 25:24-30
4. **The Arrest**
   Matt. 25:31-46
5. **The Sentence**
   Luke 13:6-9.
6. **The Settlement**
   Luke 19:11-27

Part 1
SUBJECT TO INSPECTION

Matt. 13:47-50

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The setting of this parable was the lake of Galilee. Christ's story conjured up a scene which was familiar to those brought up by the waterside. The net was literally a "dragnet," one pulled through the water by the fisherman. What is represented by the "net" that is cast into the sea? What is suggested by the sea? Rev. 17:15. "The casting of the net is the preaching of the gospel."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 122. See Ezek. 47: 9, 10.

The great dragnet gathers in all kinds of creatures from the sea, good and bad. Compare Matt. 22:10. At the close of his day's work, the fisherman returns to the harbor to sort out his catch. He then discards what is not of value. What aspect of the kingdom of heaven does this sifting work depict? By what means is the separation brought about? When is this accomplished in the case of individuals and then in the case of all mankind? Does God delight in this work of rejecting some men? Ezek. 33:11. Has man a part to play? Matt. 4:19; Luke 5:10; Jer. 16:16.

"Throughout the period of probationary time His Spirit is entreating men to accept the gift of life. It is only those who reject His pleading that will be left to perish. God has declared that sin must be destroyed as an evil ruinous to the universe. Those who cling to sin will perish in its destruction." —*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 123.

To the "end" of what "age" or "world" did Jesus point? Do you think Christ's emphasis was on "gathering" or "separating"? The work is of cleansing the kingdom from those who defile it. This means that not all will be saved.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I making good use of the probationary time God has granted me that I may be chosen when the angels come to do the work of separating the good from the evil? How may I close my own probation before the general close of probation?

"Both the parable of the tares and that of the net plainly teach that there is no time when all the wicked will turn to God. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. The good and the bad fish are together drawn ashore for a final separation." —"Christ's Object Lessons," page 123.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 122, 123 (1923 ed., pages 123, 124).

Part 2
THE INVESTORS

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money."

Matt. 25:14-18

Read also verses 19-23.

The parable of the ten virgins emphasizes personal preparation in waiting for Christ's return. The parable of the talents lays stress on what His disciples should be doing as they work in preparation for His advent. It also teaches the basis upon which Christ separates His faithful and unfaithful servants. The "man" is Christ returning to His Father. The entrusted talents are the gifts to the church (Eph. 4:8-12) as well as natural abilities.

Is Jesus your Lord today? John 20:28; Rom. 6:16-18. What are some of His gifts? 1 Cor. 12:8-11. Are they only on loan? "The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 328.

The talents have to do with the riches of Christ lent to the servants and not the fitness of His servants themselves. The measure by which Heaven entrusts divine resources is dependent on each servant's ability. Rom. 12:6. Mental faculties, speech, influence, time, health, strength, money, and kindly impulses and affections are some that are also mentioned by Mrs. White. See *Christ's Object Lessons,* pages 333-353. Can you find others?

What is the significance to Seventh-day Adventists in the thought of His "return after a long time"? On what basis did the Lord commend His servants after His inspection? Was there any difference in the commendation of the two servants? What is the "joy of thy Lord"? Compare Heb. 12:2.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I invested the gifts entrusted to me in the Master's service? For how long must I continue this work?

"Talents used are talents multiplied. Success is not the result of chance or of destiny; it is the outworking of God's own providence, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and persevering effort. The Lord desires us to use every gift we have; and if we do this, we shall have greater gifts to use. He does not supernaturally endow us with the qualifications we lack; but while we use that which we have, He will work with us to increase and strengthen every faculty."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 353.

Part 3
THE AUDIT

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant . . . : thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matt. 25:24-30

What excuses did the man with only one talent offer? What is pictured by Christ's phrase, "buried it in the earth"? Was this man any worse than the unjust steward? Luke 16:1. Is hoarding misusing? What are the "exchangers"? He was "wicked" in relationship to God and "slothful" in his service to his fellows.

"In this is given a warning to all who feel that the smallness of their endowments excuses them from service for Christ. If they could do some great thing, how gladly would they undertake it; but because they can serve only in little things, they think themselves justified in doing nothing. In this they err. The Lord in His distribution of gifts is testing character. The man who neglected to improve his talent proved himself an unfaithful servant."—*Christ's Object Lessons,* page 355.

How does Christ stress the importance of little things? Luke 16:10. On what basis was the negligent servant reproved? What were the results in His life for "time" and also for "eternity"? What did the lord order to be done with the talent that had been neglected? Was this fair?

"As in the natural, so in the spiritual world: every power unused will weaken and decay. Activity is the law of life. . . . He who refuses to impart that which he has received will at last find that he has nothing to give."—*Ibid.,* p. 364.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I ever tempted to feel that I have been endowed with very few gifts? In what ways may I multiply the talents I already have?

"However small your talent, God has a place for it. That one talent, wisely used, will accomplish its appointed work. By faithfulness in little duties, we are to work on the plan of addition, and God will work for us on the plan of multiplication. These littles will become the most precious influences in His work."—"Christ's Object Lessons," page 360.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 355-360, 362-365 (1923 ed., pages 358-363, 365-369).

Part 4
THE ARREST

Matt. 25:31-33

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left."

Read also verses 34-46.

Like the parables that have preceded this one in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, the parable of the sheep and the goats has to do with the settling of human accountability at the second coming of Christ. Why is Jesus to be the Judge? John 5:26, 27. What is the "glory" of the Son's throne? Does this picture of the judgment scene embrace more than merely the Jewish nation and any particular age of history? What should be the significance to us of the fact that there are only two classes into which the nations of the earth are finally divided?

Since every national barrier is broken down at the foot of this throne, upon what basis are all nations finally judged and separated? What place is there in this decision for doctrines and beliefs? What of all the "gray" areas of conduct when eventually there will be only black and white, right and wrong?

Why does "right side," designated for the sheep, suggest favor? Christ is spoken of in heaven as standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55), and the elect are to be on the right hand of Christ. What blessing is pronounced on those on Christ's right side?

For how long has the kingdom been prepared for them? What does this mean to you? Matt. 25:34.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are my thoughts, my words, my actions such that they are preparing me so that Christ can accept me for a place at the right hand of the Father? What does Christ's word "inasmuch" mean to me in my daily contacts and personal relationships?

"We cannot afford to live with no reference to the day of judgment; for though long delayed, it is now near, even at the door, and hasteth greatly. The trumpet of the Archangel will soon startle the living and wake the dead. At that day the wicked will be separated from the just, as the shepherd divides the goats from the sheep."—"Child Guidance," pages 560, 561.

For deeper study: "The Desire of Ages," pages 637-641.

Part 5
THE SENTENCE

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

Luke 13:6-9

Read also Matt. 21:18-22.

What is represented by Christ's vineyard? Isa. 5:7. "The generation to whom the Saviour had come were represented by the fig tree in the Lord's vineyard—within the circle of His special care and blessing."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 214.

In what ways had Israel cumbered the ground? How may we? Who is the Gardener, and in what spirit does He plead for the tree? Does He need to plead for me in this way? "The owner and the dresser of the vineyard are one in their interest in the fig tree. So the Father and the Son were one in their love for the chosen people."—*Ibid.*, p. 216.

What had John warned the Jewish leaders was to be laid at the root of the fruitless tree? Matt. 3:10.

The cursing of the actual fig tree by Jesus is the sequel to His parable of the fig tree. See *The Desire of Ages*, page 584. The barren fig tree disappointed Jesus. Everything had been done for it that the gardener could. It had developed only a good showing of leaves. These normally should indicate that the tree was laden with fruit. But on careful examination none was found. So the people of Israel disappointed our Lord: Everything possible had been done for them, but they bore no fruit in righteousness. "Christ's act in cursing the fig tree had astonished the disciples. It seemed to them unlike His ways and works."—*The Desire of Ages*, page 582.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is Christ needing to bear too long with me, or am I causing Him joy because of the fruits of the Spirit I am bearing?

"You realize, though it may be dimly, that you are a cumberer of the ground. Yet in His great mercy God has not cut you down. He does not look coldly upon you. He does not turn away with indifference, or leave you to destruction. Looking upon you He cries, as He cried so many centuries ago concerning Israel, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man.' Hos. 11:8, 9. The pitying Saviour is saying concerning you, Spare it this year also, till I shall dig about it and dress it."—"Christ's Object Lessons," pages 217, 218.

For deeper study: "Christ's Object Lessons," pages 212-218 (1923 ed., pages 215-221).

Part 6
THE SETTLEMENT

"He . . . spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

Luke 19:11-15

Read also verses 16-27.

Note carefully the circumstances which led to the need for this story. The people expected "the kingdom" right now; but Jesus told them He, the "nobleman," was to go away in order to obtain the kingdom. Compare Mark 13:34; Phil. 2:9-11.

This parable is in some ways similar to that of the talents. In one the servants received according to their abilities, in the other each received equal opportunities. The Lord was leaving responsibilities upon His servants.

The one-talent servant represents those who use their talents for worldly interests. "Like the unfaithful servant they are afraid that the increase of the talent that God has lent them will be called for to advance the spread of truth; therefore they tie it up by investing it in earthly treasures and burying it in the world, thus making it so fast that they have nothing, or next to nothing, to invest in the cause of God. They have buried it, fearing that God would call for some of the principal or increase."—*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 386.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I occupying till Christ comes, using the life and opportunity He has given me as something He has put in trust to me?

"The Master will require each of His stewards to give an account of his stewardship, to show what he has gained with the talents entrusted to him. Those to whom rewards are given will impute no merit to themselves for their diligent trading; they will give all the glory to God. They speak of that which was delivered to them, as 'Thy pound,' not their own. When they speak of their gain, they are careful to state whence it came. The capital was advanced by the Master. They have traded upon it successfully, and return the principal and interest to the Giver." —"Testimonies," Vol. 2, pp. 284, 285.

For deeper study: "Testimonies," Vol. 3, pp. 385-390.

Part 7 ◇ SUMMARY QUESTIONS ◇ TO TEST YOUR STUDY POWER

1. Who will do the work of severing the wicked from the just? _____

2. Which of the three servants made 100 per cent gain for his master? _____

_____

3. What two adjectives did the master use to describe the servant who had neglected to use the one talent? _____ _____

4. Who are gathered before the Son of man when He comes with all the holy angels? _____

5. For how many years did the fig tree disappoint its owner? _____

6. Choose the correct answer: What does the word "occupy" mean in the parable of the pounds? (a) dwell in, (b) tend to business, (c) redeem. _____

ANSWERS:

1. The angels. 2. The first and second. 3. Wicked and slothful. 4. All nations. 5. Three. 6. b.

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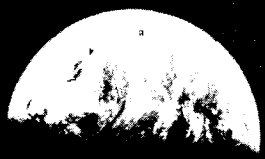

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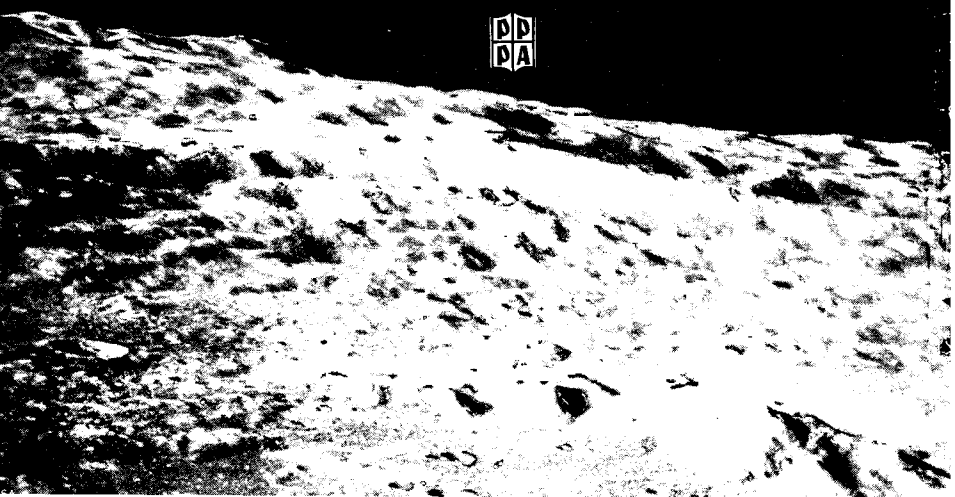

Thirteenth Sabbath Offering

JUNE 27, 1970 · CENTRAL EUROPEAN DIVISION

East and West—The Divided City . . . The Brandenburg Gate . . . Air raids of World War II . . . The American Airlift . . . the city with the most suicides. When someone mentions Berlin, scenes and reports of these incidents and landmarks flash into our minds.

Our members in Berlin are conscientious workers for Christ. Taped telephone sermons, personal family visitations, brass band evangelism, and Branch Sabbath Schools are just a few of the activities they have initiated in the city to entice souls for Christ.

An evangelistic center located in Berlin is one project of the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering overflow. The new, modern building will attract the masses of Berlin who otherwise might not hear of Christ.

Half of the citizens of Berlin are over sixty-five years of age. The Seventh-day Adventist Church feels a responsibility toward these elderly people. With the help of the overflow, a six-story retirement home will be completed in a Berlin suburb.

The Waldfriede Hospital needs funds for expansion and modernization. Without these additions, the hospital will lose its importance and attraction among the people of Germany. The believers in Central Europe are looking to their fellow believers in the Sabbath Schools around the world to help meet these needs on June 27.

Lessons for the Third Quarter of 1970

Sabbath School members who have not received an adult *Lesson Quarterly* for the third quarter of 1970 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first lesson. The title of the series is "Christ, the Incomparable." The title of the first lesson is "Christ, the Answer to Man's Quest." The memory verse is 1 John 5:11.

The outline is as follows:

1. **Life's Great Quest. Acts 16:25-31.**
2. **The Gift of Infinite Love. John 3:16-18.**
3. **God's Provision for Man's Need. John 6:51, 54, 55.**
4. **Jesus Christ Is God Incarnate. Matthew 16:13-17.**
5. **The Great Invitation. Matthew 11:28-30.**
6. **The Two Doors to Destiny. 1 John 5:6-12.**

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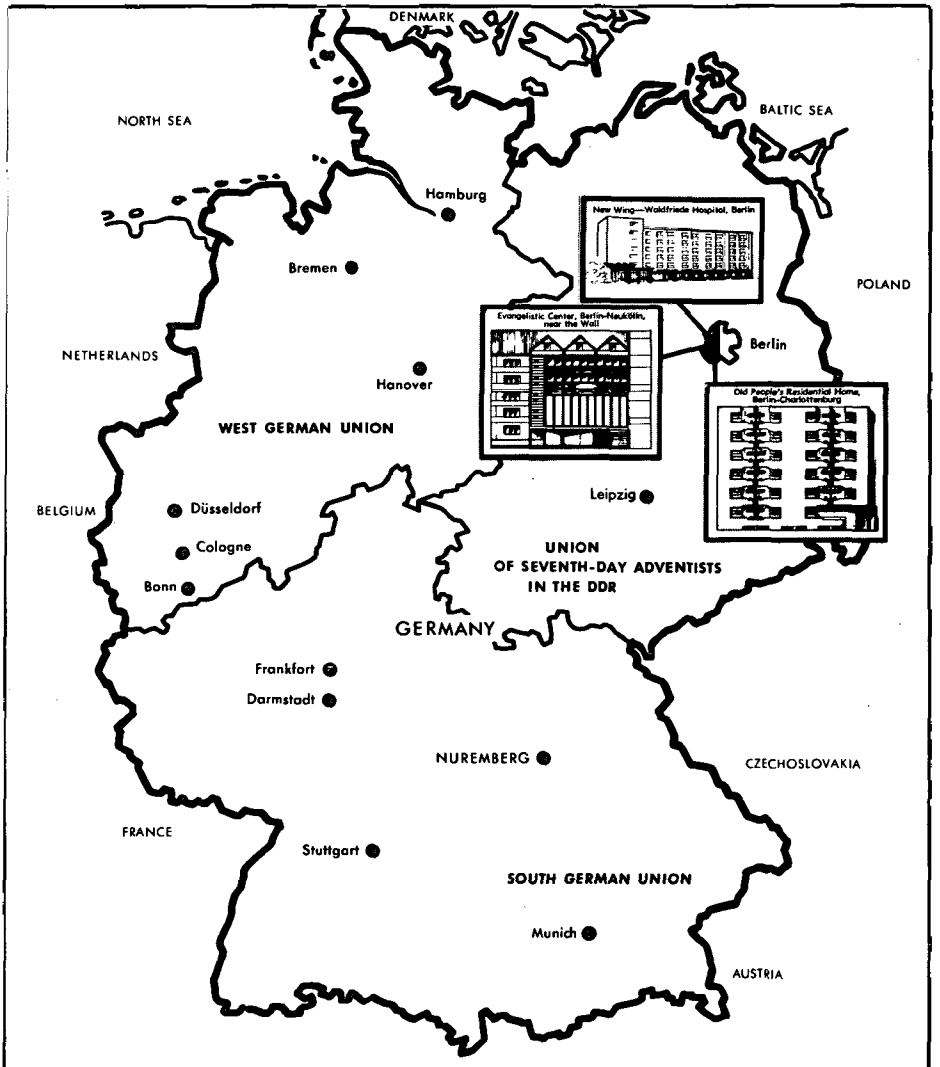

CENTRAL EUROPEAN DIVISION

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Memb.	Sab. Sch. Memb.
South German	29,087,468	240	12,961	15,601
Union of S. D. A. in DDR	18,403,800	341	12,670	14,107
West German	28,021,371	197	11,784	13,639
West Berlin Conference	2,197,300	15	1,571	1,727
Division Totals	77,709,939	793	38,986	45,074