

Sabbath School Lessons
for Adults



Name

Address

City State

TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

These lessons will cover incidents and teachings that came during the last three months of Jesus' pre-resurrection life.

No part of the Master's sojourn among us is more important and deserving of dedicated study than the series you are about to consider. Our Lord had but a short time to remain here, so He spoke clearly and straight-forwardly. What He did was meaningful enough to gain many chapters of detailed narration in the Gospels. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

The Sabbath School Department has consistently encouraged regular home study of the quarterly lessons. In this series of study guides you cannot possibly learn what is offered by the lessons in a short class period. If you are interested enough in these aspects of Jesus' life and teachings to claim some of the knowledge offered for yourself, you must give extra time to home study.

Additional references are provided with each lesson to enable deeper study into each topic. A greater than usual amount of reading is required to answer the questions, and actual class time will not be enough to cover the material. Class sessions should be used wisely to review the material covered in the weekly lessons and provide opportunity for sharing varying impressions gleaned from individual study.

No teacher should dare attempt to teach a Sabbath School lesson without having given it detailed study before class. Carelessness in this regard will not only cause the valuable applications of the lessons to go untouched, but a waste of time for the entire class will result.

The purpose of the quarterly is to challenge the sincere Bible student to search diligently for new areas of thought which give extra meaning to the many adverse circumstances that brought a close to the Greatest Life ever lived. This will not only augment the student's storehouse of intellectual knowledge, but will give him added grace to live a more spirit-filled life. "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21).

Sabbath School Quarterly

Adult Lessons

Volume 56

Number 2

Published quarterly by the Bible Advocate Press at Second and Willow, Stanberry, Mo., and entered as second class matter July 14, 1924, at the post office at Stanberry, Missouri under the act of March 3, 1879.

Second Quarter

1971

April, May, June

Subscription price: \$1.35 per year; 40 cents a single copy;
35 cents per copy in bundle orders of six or more;
or \$1.10 each when ordered by the year in clubs
of six or more ordered sent to one address.

Address all orders to
BIBLE ADVOCATE PRESS
STANBERRY, MISSOURI 64489

The Great Supper

"For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper" (Luke 14:24).

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 14:15-24.

Lesson Aim: To make the student aware of the cost of becoming pious and complacent as a disciple of Christ, and to give him a sense of urgency in bringing others to the knowledge of Christ.

Introduction: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God," said a man who was present with Jesus at the table of a prominent Pharisee. These words were prompted by Jesus' mention of the resurrection of the just, which is associated with the commencement of the earth reign of the Messiah, at which time He was to hold a great feast for all His subjects. The man who uttered these words had in mind the favored position the Jews hoped to occupy during the great reign of the Messiah on earth.

Jesus gave the parable of the Great Supper to correct the faulty thinking of this man. Jesus was trying to show him that even while he had uttered the words of blessing, a great spiritual supper was already in progress and the invitation had been given to many. But they (the Jewish rulers) were regarding the summons with indifference (Luke 14:18-20). In spite of this, the common people among the Jewish nation were being invited to the feast and they were responding (Matthew 21:32; Luke 14:21; 15:1, 2).

Despite the fact that the Gospel appeal was well received by the masses, it still failed to fill the spiritual banquet hall. As the American spiritual says, "There is plenty good room, plenty good room in my father's kingdom." Thus it became necessary for Him Who gave the supper to command His servants to make a universal appeal to all mankind, consequently allowing the Gentile to share in the kingdom blessings. Those described as being in the highways and hedges were the Gentiles. Highways and hedges were usually found on the outskirts of a town or city. In this passage (Luke 14), Jesus used these as metaphors representing the true spiritual state of the Gentiles, who were considered to be "off limits" to spiritual blessings; but now, through the grac-

ious invitation of the Heavenly Father, they were being invited to the great feast by means of the Gospel.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Isaiah 25:6-8; Zephaniah 1:7, 8; Matthew 22:1-10; Mark 12:37 (last part); John 7:45-48.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. To better understand the parable, discuss who represented "The certain man who made a great supper and bade many," and also the bidders. Luke 14:16, 17.
2. Consider the reasons given for not attending the supper. (Luke 14:18-20). Evaluate these reasons in view of Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14.
3. What report did the servant give the master, and what was the master's response? Luke 14:21. (NOTE: The invitation was first given to those in the streets and lanes found **within** the city, while the second invitation went to those outside.)
4. Were there enough in the second group to fill all the places at the supper? Luke 14:22. Would this indicate that they also made excuses?
5. Where were the servants sent to compel others to "come in?" Luke 14:23. Whom do these represent? Ephesians 2:11-13.

Conclusion: This parable contemplates the extension of the kingdom of God to the whole world. It directs the Gospel to be carried to the lowliest and outermost circles of human society. The Christian's responsibility is not just to "preach the Gospel" to those in his own family, or his neighbors, or to his close friends. We cannot scorn to give the message to others simply because they do not meet our own financial or social standards.

The Value of One Lost Soul

"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 15:1-10.

Lesson Aim: To make the student aware that Jesus cares about the salvation of every individual. May these parables give us a real burden for reaching others with the truth of the Gospel.

Introduction: The entire fifteenth chapter of Luke emphasizes Jesus' estimate of the value of one lost soul. How precious these parables are to those of us who have been found!

Often a Christian has one grievous weakness; he forgets too easily the value of a life won for Christ. Immediately after conversion, our testimony is zealous and joyful, but soon the fascination may wear off and we begin to take God's concern over souls for granted. Our tongue becomes heavy, our smiles fade away and our lips hang together when we should be telling the glad story of salvation.

Prayer meetings in which the burdened saints prayed for a lost world have been replaced with activities that express far less compassion for lost souls. A compassionate tear has become an undignified emotion.

It appears that only a few have a burning desire for lost souls while others remain indifferent and apathetic. Two factors may be cited for this apathy: (1) excess occupation with one's own interests and self-indulgence; (2) an attitude of self-pride, and contempt toward the lowly and undesirable elements in society, not realizing that it was for those, too, that Christ died. It was this "holier than thou" attitude of the scribes and Pharisees toward the publicans and sinners that prompted Jesus to relate the parables of the lost.

In the parable of the prodigal son we may find it easy to sympathize with the older brother in his complaint to the father. However, this feast was not an entertainment for the gratification of the prodigal, but simply a father's expression of the joy he felt at his son's return.

In time, the duties and commitments of the younger son would become the rule and not the exception, and in due time HE TOO might venture to say, "Lo these many years do I serve thee"; and of him the father would then say, "Son, thou art ever with me."

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 18:7-14; 6:24-34; Luke 10:25-37; Psalm 115:12-18; Job 27:1-8; Mark 8:34-38.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What importance did God place upon man? Psalm 8:3-9; John 3:16. What might man consider as the value of his own soul? Matthew 16:26.
2. Briefly review the parables: The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7); The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10); The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).
3. Assuming that these three parables represent the sinner, discuss these possible reasons for his unsaved condition: (a) Was he lost because of lack of Bible knowledge and carelessness in prayer life? (b) Was he lost because he was completely unaware of his unredeemed condition? If so, who was responsible for his unawareness? John 21:15-17; Luke 22:32. (NOTE: The coin was lost **within** the house.) (c.) Was he lost because he knowingly and willfully estranged himself from God?
4. Consider other reasons men might stray from God. Ezekiel 34:2-6; Romans 14:10, 13. How should the Christian regard those weak in faith? I Corinthians 12:22-26; Galatians 6:1, 2.
5. Discuss the effort put forth in seeking the lost sheep and coin. Luke 15:4, 8. To what length did Christ go to find us, His lost sheep? John 10:11, 15.
6. Considering the fact that there is rejoicing in heaven when a lost soul is found, what should our attitude be?

Conclusion: The recovery of someone who may be lost in a desert or forest wilderness is watched with great interest, and the world reacts with joy when that person is found alive and well. Our Great Shepherd came down from His home above "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Parables about Vineyards

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scripture, 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" (Matthew 21:42).

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 20:9-18.

Lesson Aim: To remind the student that God has placed us in His vineyard to care for the vines and harvest the fruit. We have a responsibility to serve His church and care for His people.

Introduction: Three parables concerning vineyards are chosen for our study. Each presents a different spiritual truth relevant to the life of a Christian.

The first parable (Luke 20:17, 18) illustrates the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish nation and the forfeiting of their national spiritual blessings to the Gentiles. While this parable applies principally to the Jews in the days of Jesus' life on earth, we may extend its meaning to subsequent periods in history and also to our present age. History tells of many nations and even individuals who have rejected the Messiah, thus forfeiting untold blessings.

The second parable (Matthew 21:28-32) is the story of the two sons who were asked to work in their father's vineyard. The first son refused to go at the father's request, but later repented and went. The second son said that he would go but did not. The first son represented the publicans and harlots who eventually accepted John's message and subsequently became followers of Jesus (Luke 15:1, 2; Matthew 21:32). The second son may represent the religious leaders who at first gave temporary approval to John's message but never really followed him completely (John 5:35; Luke 7:29, 30). It followed that those who rejected John's message rejected Jesus also.

The third parable (Matthew 20:1-16) teaches that there is one reward for all who accept Christ; i.e., we are not saved by our own works but by the sovereign grace of God.

In each of these stories or examples Jesus used a basic easy-to-understand point of reference for his listeners. They were people oriented to a farming environment. They could not understand the

intellectual rhetoric and vague allusions of the learned religious leaders of the day. But through these simple stories they were able to comprehend the profound truths of the Gospel message.

If one considers the responsibility of a farmer to his crop, he will be able to understand the responsible attitude God expects of those who are called out of sin. The vineyard is the world, and we are placed here to tend and harvest the crop.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Isaiah 5:1-7; Mark 12:1-12; John 15:1-8; Luke 13:6-10; Matthew 23:29-39.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Analyze the message of the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Luke 20:9-18; Matthew 21:33-41). Define the duties of the husbandmen and describe their attitude toward those who were to come and harvest the fruit.
2. In the parable of the two sons, note Jesus' evaluation of those who say little but show a sense of responsibility, and those who talk freely but are inconsistent in action. Matthew 21:28-31.
3. Briefly relate the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Matthew 20:1-16. (a) How many different groups were hired and how many hours did each work? (b) How did the salary agreements differ? Verses 2, 4, 7. (c) How did the workers react to their salary differences? (d) Consider the employer's justification for his action. Verses 13-15.
4. How may these parables apply to us?
5. Discuss the differences in the three parables studied.

Conclusion: The Christian life does not consist entirely of receiving. We, too, must produce. In order for us to do so, we must have access to resources which will supply that which is necessary. We can only produce and survive if we abide in the true vine. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).

The Resurrection of Lazarus

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

SCRIPTURE READING: John 11:38-45.

Lesson Aim: To make us aware of the combinations of Christ's moving compassion and His desire to see His Father's name glorified by the miraculous return of Lazarus from death.

Introduction: Few chapters in the Bible relate a more stirring story than John 11. A resurrection in itself makes it worthy of extra attention. However, the fact that it tells of one brought back from the dead is not the only reason this chapter is so precious. There were cases of the dead being restored to life before: the raising of the widow's son at Nain, and the bringing to life of Jairus' daughter.

The incident under consideration this week is unique because it describes vividly the emotions surrounding the miracle. We note the simple, although limited, faith of the sisters in the Master. The death of their beloved brother, added to the seeming reluctance of Jesus to rush to Bethany after receiving the message of Lazarus' sickness, brought such deep grief to the sisters that the entire community seemed affected.

We have here one of the best descriptions of Jesus' compassion that can be found anywhere. The shortest verse in the Bible stands out in this chapter like a tall tower. "Jesus wept." Even the Jews were impressed to remark simply, "Behold how He loved him."

Modernists have tried to explain away the supernatural aspect of the two resurrections preceding this by implying the subjects may just have been unconscious. In the case of Lazarus, however, there is no way to claim such a possibility, since we are told that a decaying process had already begun. Jesus did indeed have the power to bring men back from the dead.

Supporting references for Lesson Preparation: Luke 10:38-42; John 10:22-42; John 11:47-56; John 12:10, 11; John 5:21.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. How did Jesus learn of Lazarus' sickness? John 11:3. What was His reaction? John 11:4, 6.
2. What did Jesus encounter upon His arrival in Bethany? John 11:17, 31-33. How did He react? John 11:35, 38.
3. Consider the facts of this miracle: (a) The length of Lazarus' stay in the tomb. John 11:39. (b) The impossibility of Lazarus' leaving the grave by his own power. John 11:38, 39, 44. (c) The weight of the stone, requiring more than one person to move it from the tomb. John 11:41.
4. We have considered the compassion Jesus had for Lazarus and his sisters, and some of the facts of the miracle; but what was the real purpose of Lazarus' death and resurrection? John 11:4, 15, 25, 26, 27, 37, 40, 42.
5. What were the immediate results? John 11:45, 46.

Conclusion: The purpose of Lazarus' resurrection was to remove any doubt concerning the divinity of Jesus. In fact, the whole intent of the book of John is to bring about faith in the deity of the Lord. This is why the careful student of the Gospel of John will observe that the book is built around certain select miracles, usually followed by statements of those who trusted Christ after the working of such miracles. For example, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed him" (John 2:11).

The Triumphant Entry

"Saying, blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38).

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 21:1-11.

Lesson Aim: To show that despite all the pomp and glory shown Jesus at the time of His entry into Jerusalem, He did not exalt Himself, but was the perfect example of meekness.

Introduction: The final week of Jesus' life began with an uplifting and triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and ended with a resounding resurrection.

The victorious entry into the city is not the first evidence of Jesus' royal character. He was recognized by shepherds and wise men at His birth. The masses recognized that when He taught, it was with authority. He called to the disciples, "Follow me," and they did so without hesitation. When devil-possessed phychotics who menaced society encountered Jesus, He commanded the devils to come out of the victims, and they did. After He sent out seventy men in groups of two, they came back elated, exclaiming, "Lord, even the devils are subject to thy name!" He even had command over the wind and waves.

Yet despite all His qualifications for Kingship, Jesus chose to ride into Jerusalem on the back of a lowly donkey. He was not interested in receiving worldly acclaim and honor; He sought to impress upon the people that His was a life dedicated to the service of others. At this point He could have capitalized on His popularity with the multitude, but He chose to finish His life as He had begun it—for only as a humble man could He capture the hearts of those He came to save. He was living the truth of His own precept: "... every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14).

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Isaiah 9; Zechariah 9; Mark 11:1-26; Luke 19:28-48; John 12:12-19.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Recall some prophecies regarding the coming of Jesus as King. Isaiah 9:6, 7; 32:1, 2; Zechariah 9:9.
2. At what time did Christ's disciples expect Him to set up His kingdom? Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6.
3. Describe the effect the triumphant entry had on the citizens of Jerusalem. Matthew 21:8-11.
4. Discuss the reason Jesus rode on the back of a young donkey. Matthew 21:5. How would this represent an act of meekness?

Conclusion: Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem was one of the few times during His ministry when He was recognized for what He truly was—the King of Kings.

Even today the Gospel of Christ is not recognized by the majority of the world as being the healing balm of life. However, occasionally amidst scores of lukewarm professors of faith, we will find those who are zealous, dedicated, and willing to put manpower behind their claim of faith. In this world of darkness, men discover facts that substantiate the truth of the Bible. When someone lost in the darkness of sin receives Christ as his Saviour, Christians can share in the moment of joyous recognition that the Master received amidst the glad shoutings of a jubilant throng.

Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 23:1-13.

Lesson Aim: To teach that success for the church and individuals comes through spiritual progress and growth. To put emphasis on material growth only will bring the "woes" upon us as it did to the Pharisees.

Introduction: The uttering of the woes against the scribes and Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew marks Christ's final efforts to shake these leaders from their hypocrisy. Christ had exercised the utmost patience to bring these leaders to a consciousness of their true spiritual condition, but Satan had so blinded their minds that they could not be awakened to their hypocritical state.

Jesus had used face-saving devices by employing parables to convey to the religious leaders their true spiritual condition, but this had failed to accomplish His desired aim. On one occasion, the Pharisees were so sharply reproved by one of Jesus' parables that they began to ridicule Him. The Bible shows the reason for their displeasure: "And the Pharisees also, who were **covetous**, heard all these things; and they derided him" (Luke 16:14).

The parable that Jesus had spoken in the first part of the chapter and his stirring denunciation of the love of riches took away the cloak of piety the scribes and Pharisees had been hiding behind, and they were greatly disturbed. Time and time again Jesus employed the indirect method of using parables to reveal to these religious leaders the true content of their corrupt hearts, at the same time allowing them to be convicted with no one realizing it but themselves.

This approach had failed because the scribes and Pharisees were hardened by sin. So now after having exercised the fullest degree of divine forbearance and longsuffering, there was left only one other method—stern denunciation. It is interesting to note that these denunciations spoken in Matthew 23 were made in Jeru-

salem, the stronghold of Jesus' enemies. It was the best place to strike a decisive blow at His foes.

Each woe was a denunciation of specific sins and attitudes cherished by the scribes and Pharisees. The sixth woe is somewhat analytic of all the woes which Jesus uttered against the leaders because it reveals the source of every sinful trait for which Jesus condemned them. The inner state of their hearts was corrupt while they sought to hide this fact by an over-involvement in externals. This was a defense mechanism which protected or concealed their true natures. This continued use of defense mechanisms indicated a disturbed and sick individual. Jesus realized this and openly denounced these sick leaders that others might avoid the same condition.

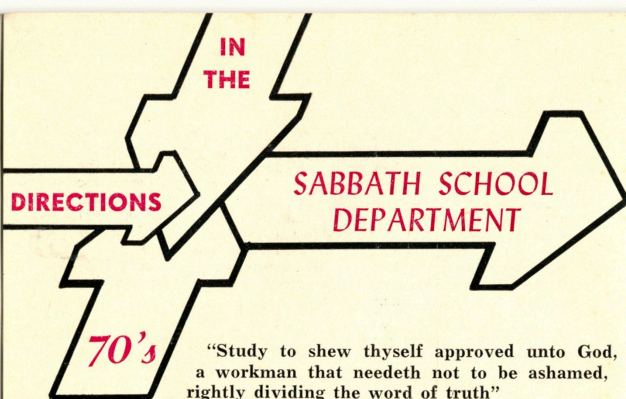
It is important that we study each woe carefully as each contains a grave warning to both the individual Christian and the church as a whole.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 12:13-44; Luke 18:9-14; 20:19-47; 21:1-4; John 8:12-59.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Elaborate on the implication made by our Lord, when He accused the scribes and Pharisees of shutting up the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 23:13.
2. What did the Lord give to Peter as related in Matthew 16:19? (NOTE: A key is used to either lock or unlock an entrance. When the knowledge of how to enter God's kingdom is hidden or ignored, the deceiver is locking or shutting up the kingdom of heaven.)
3. Name some efforts being made today to shut up the kingdom. Matthew 24:4, 5; I Timothy 4:1, 2.
4. How did Jesus evaluate the tithe-paying of the scribes and Pharisees? Matthew 23:23, 24.
5. Discuss the limitations of outside appearances. Matthew 23:25-28.
6. What was Peter's attitude regarding external adornment? I Peter 3:3, 4.
7. Even though Jesus spoke to the scribes and Pharisees in a stinging manner, what were His true sentiments toward them? Matthew 23:37, 38; Luke 19:41, 42.

Conclusion: Perhaps the most tragic aspect of religious hypocrisy is that the hypocrite is not only blinding himself to his own faults, but he is also deceiving others into accepting him for what he appears, thereby causing them to believe whatever he teaches. The hypocrite is lost, and he is drawing others with him down the path away from God.



II Timothy 2:15

The above portion of Scripture defines the twofold purpose of the Sabbath School Department: first, to provide materials so the individual may study God's inspired Word; and second, to rightly divide this inspired Word.

Each year witnesses additions to the growing body of Sabbath school literature to promote this twofold purpose.

In genuine concern for promoting Bible knowledge, this department endeavors to provide for you lessons co-ordinated into a curriculum which aids spiritual growth along with the acquisition of Bible knowledge.

Another aspect of Sabbath schools which demands the attention of this department is that of encouraging efficient service and leadership in the administration of the local Sabbath school.

To meet these needs, the Sabbath School Department plans several important "special projects" along with its regular assignment of providing a complete line of Sabbath school materials for all ages.

EFFECTIVE SABBATH SCHOOLS BUILD THE CHURCH

16

HANDBOOK FOR LOCAL SABBATH SCHOOLS . . .

Most of the assignments for the "Handbook for Sabbath Schools" have been made. The printing of this handbook will begin as soon as the editing can be completed and the funds become available to carry the cost of its printing. The handbook will be sent to the local Sabbath schools without charge as some of the materials will be used by permission of various copywriters. We hope to make this handbook available to the Sabbath schools sometime this year if funds permit. The estimated cost of preparation and printing is \$800.

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL QUARTERLY . . .

A curriculum for a three-year Junior High School quarterly is being planned and will be written and printed as soon as funds become available. The initial cost for the writing and artwork will be sizeable.

LIBRARY OF RESOURCE MATERIALS . . .

This project will take several years to complete. It is our intention to provide resource books on a check-out basis to those who may be interested in specific areas of church education. This library is projected to include audio-visual materials as well as reference books.

**May 15 is Sabbath School Department
Emphasis Sabbath . . .**

17

Signs of Christ's Coming

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 21:25-33.

Lesson Aim: To familiarize the student with the world events that will precede the second advent of Christ.

Introduction: Few events in the New Testament receive as much written attention as does the second coming of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The fact that Jesus will return was stated simply and indisputably upon His ascension into heaven, recorded in the first chapter of Acts: "...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." John quotes Jesus as saying, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself..."

Despite the clear detail presented in the Bible describing the Second Advent, there are numerous contradictory views being preached today. We must expect these, since Jesus warned that false prophets and deceivers would arise, along with an increase in iniquity and a decrease in individual concern for others. Only those who endure unto the end will be saved. Watching for and recognizing the signs of His coming are as important to the Christian as believing in the fact of His return.

As sure as Jesus' second coming is the fact that there will be two classes of people on earth when He returns. On the one side will be those who have been anxiously watching and waiting for Him. In the doomed group will be those who have not made the necessary preparation. They will be crying to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne..."

Those who pray sincerely now will rejoice in their salvation, while those who do not bother to pray now will be vainly pleading in desperation. The wise Bible student will take time to

familiarize himself as completely as possible with the signs pointing to Jesus' coming. He will carefully compare doctrines in the light of scriptural teaching, therefore qualifying himself to be caught up to meet Jesus when He comes with power and great glory.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 24:1-51; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-24; 24:25-38; Acts 1:1-11; I Thessalonians 5:1-10; Daniel 12:1-13.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Job is considered one of the earliest of the inspired Scripture writers, having been contemporary with Abraham. What are his views concerning the Saviour's coming? Job 19:25-27.
2. Describe an evident sign of Jesus' second coming. Luke 21:24. Note additional signs of His return. Matthew 24:6-8; Mark 13:8. Discuss possible fulfillments of these signs.
3. How are some of the social signs of the second advent being fulfilled? Matthew 24:10, 12; Luke 17:26-28.
4. Give Jesus' warning against those who teach that Christ is already here. Matthew 24:23-26.
5. What warning is given those who treat the second coming lightly? Matthew 24:42-51.
6. What is the Christian's attitude toward Christ's coming? Luke 21:28.

Conclusion: The moral decadence of practically every nation on earth is a universal testimony of the Lord's soon coming. Many nations who hitherto boasted of their social and moral excellence can no longer do so, because it is evident that the seeds of decay have begun to sprout throughout their whole national structure. The followers of Jesus understood the reason for these events, and are not despairing but are looking up for they "know that their redemption draweth nigh."

Today is Sabbath School Department Emphasis Day.

Parables of Warning

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:13).

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 25:1-13.

Lesson Aim: To illustrate the vigilant and expectant attitude of faith of those that look for Him.

Introduction: The parables under consideration in this week's lesson deal with stern warnings covering three different areas of Christian living.

The story of the Ten Virgins cautions us about the preparation for our meeting with the Son of Man when He returns. It does not explicitly point out any defined Christian virtue; it simply says to be ready. Whatever qualifications must be made in order for us to meet the Bridegroom should be made now—during the preparation period.

The second parable (the Talents) deals with our everyday lives from the day we begin to serve Jesus until the day He calls us to give an account for what we have accomplished. The obligation to be profitable servants is impressed upon us. We are forced to examine ourselves.

This illustration also gives us some insight into the demanding attitude of our Lord. He is described as "an hard man, reaping where He had not sown, and gathering where He had not strawed." This dismisses the concept that the righteous Judge will overlook laziness and smallness just because we may have peculiar problems.

The virgins were described as waiting for the Lord and the servants as working for Him. One represents the inward spiritual life of the Christian, the other, his outward activity. In order to maintain a **profitable** outward activity for the kingdom of God, a spiritual awareness must be diligently maintained within the heart.

The third warning gives a word of caution concerning tendencies to acquire wrong ideas about our real mission for Christ here on earth. We are prone to think in terms of big and noble deeds which reap immediate spectacular rewards. While we look for opportunities to perform a notable deed, we may be passing up

our obligations to minister unto "the least" of the brethren. Jesus tells us plainly that our eternal life depends upon our proper evaluation of small and seemingly insignificant services.

Note particularly the fact that each of these parables speaks to every person who claims to be Christ's. None is exempt. If you have a hope of eternal life, you must find for yourself the message in these words of advice and heed them implicitly. Few lessons are so universally applicable. They are simple, direct, and conclusive. Surely any negligent transgressor will be without excuse when he must answer for having set any one of these teachings aside.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 7:21-29; 25:14-46; Luke 19:11-27; Ezekiel 3:15-27; Titus 3:1-15.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Consider the parable of the Ten Virgins.
 - (a) In what way do the wise virgins differ from the foolish? Matthew 25:3, 4.
 - (b) Describe the results suffered by the foolish virgins. Matthew 25:8-12.
 - (c) What is the significance of this parable?
2. Relate briefly the story of the talents.
 - (a) Upon what basis were the talents distributed? Matthew 25:15.
 - (b) Compare the reaction of the three servants. Verses 16-18.
 - (c) How were each of them rewarded? Verses 21, 23, 28-30.
 - (d) What excuse was given for the inactivity of the third servant? Verses 24, 25.
3. Analyze the parable of the Sheep and the Goats.
 - (a) What great event takes place at the coming of the Son of God? Matthew 25:32.
 - (b) Name the reward of those on His right hand. Verse 34.
 - (c) Why were they granted entrance? Verses 35-38.
 - (d) How may we serve the Master today? Verse 40.
 - (e) How will those who disregard this duty be dealt with? Verse 46.
4. Describe the Father's attitude toward those who do not heed divine warnings. Jeremiah 6:10, 11.

Conclusion: We understand enough of the justice of God to be confident that He does not generally punish without having given proper warning. We know that the Father does not change and that His Word is sure. What He has promised us will come without doubt, and what He says we must do without hesitation.

The Last Sermon of Jesus

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

SCRIPTURE READING: John 14, 15, and 16.

Lesson Aim: To reassure the student that regardless how dismal things may become, the Christian is assured of comfort through the perfect peace that Jesus left and the Comforter He sent.

Introduction: It is a bit difficult to place accurately the time when Jesus gave the memorable Farewell Discourse to His disciples. It is probable that it was spoken while the disciples were gathered in the upper room for their last supper together.

The need for this message is obvious. After several years of intimate association with the Master, the disciples were about to be separated from their Leader. Never before had they known anyone who could give them such words of wisdom, such insight into their problems, such personal satisfaction and security. They would surely miss Him, and no one realized this fact more than Jesus.

He comforts them by explaining that while they would be physically separated from Him, the disciples would be compensated in two ways. First, He explained that they would meet again one day: "I go to prepare a place for you," and "I will come again" (John 14:2, 3). But what about the meantime? While they waited, who was to comfort them in their fears, disappointments, and frustrations? Who would give assurance when doubts arose? How would they experience the manifestation of Divine power when a miracle was needed? Now that He Who had calmed the stormy sea was being taken away, who would calm the great storms of spiritual conflict? Could they now face a hostile world without this Man of Galilee?

To erase these fears, Jesus promised His second compensation, a Comforter to abide with them forever (John 14:16). A Divine spirit would actually live **within** them, not just amongst them. Instead of having to depend upon their Master to say the right words at the correct time, the Holy Spirit would be in each

of them, giving them the ability to master the situations they would encounter.

He left them His peace, and taught them how to love. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: John 14:1-31; 15:1-27; 16:1-33; 17:1-26.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What declaration did Jesus make to the disciples regarding a change to come in their association? John 14:19; 16:16.
2. Why did Jesus consider it important that He leave? John 16:7.
3. Describe the function of the Comforter. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; 8:32.
4. What comforting thought did Jesus leave with the people? John 14:1-3.
5. Why did Jesus give this sermon? John 16:33.
6. Jesus' prayer in John 17 may be divided into three parts. Determine the object in each portion of this prayer.
 - (a) John 17:1-5.
 - (b) John 17:6-19.
 - (c) John 17:20-26.

Conclusion: Although Jesus directed these words to His disciples almost 2,000 years ago, they are still relevant to our time. Often the Christian must stand alone, bravely defending his faith to an unbelieving world. But he need not despair because in the words of Jesus, found in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, he can find strength. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

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The Last Supper

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:10)

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 22:14-20.

Lesson Aim: To emphasize the greatest memorial service ever to be instituted, the Lord's Supper, commemorating Christ's death.

Introduction: It is unfortunate that there are almost as many different opinions concerning the observance of the Lord's Supper as there are existing denominations. Amidst all this confusion we are left with the overwhelming fact that the Lord's Supper is a solemn and sacred memorial of Christ's sacrifice for us, and the various aspects of its observance should not be considered in an argumentative or irreverent manner.

Jesus commanded the observance of the Lord's Supper and presented a very graphic example of how He wished His followers to observe this memorial to His death. Each student has a grave responsibility to study the various aspects of the memorial ritual. Needless to say, this lesson cannot cover each detail fully; therefore, it can serve only as a guide to further study by the individual.

Opinions vary as to the relationship between the Lord's Supper and Israel's Passover. Let us consider a comparison of the two. The Passover was centered around the yearly sacrifice of a lamb without blemish. This was an example of the sinless Christ. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin..." (II Corinthians 5:21). The passover served two outstanding functions: First, it commemorated the delivery from the bondage of Egypt; secondly, it pointed forward to the sacrificial gift of the Lamb of God on Calvary, which made possible our freedom from the bondage of sin.

Even though the Passover and the Lord's Supper seem somewhat similar at first, there are nevertheless distinct differences. The ancient Passover required a yearly sacrifice (Exodus 12:14), while Christ, our Lamb, was sacrificed once for all (Hebrews 9:27; 10:10). The Passover pointed ahead to Christ's greater sacrifice; the cross brought an end to the Passover—the final sacrifice had been made. We no longer need to celebrate an event that points toward the cross. That point has been reached and passed.

The New Testament points out that the Lord's Supper was instituted while Jesus and His disciples were eating the Passover meal. Because of this, it is logical to assume that the Lord's Supper is to be kept as an anniversary, as was the Passover. This is confirmed by Paul in I Corinthians 11:23. During supper the Lord took bread and wine and shared it with His disciples. The bread symbolized His body which was to be given for all mankind; the fruit of the vine was a symbol of the new covenant to be written in His blood.

Also at the time of the supper Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, again demonstrating His love for them. Although He was their Master, He was not too proud to stoop in the dust of the floor to wipe His disciples' tired and dirty feet. His demonstration of humility is an example for every Christian that we must never be too proud to stoop to help those who are sunk in the mire of sin.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Exodus 12; Matthew 26; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:1-38; John 13; I Corinthians 5:6-8; 11:17-34.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What ritual, symbolic of Jesus' death, was given the children of Israel just prior to their departure from Egypt? Exodus 12:3-14.
2. Describe how Jesus fits into this picture. I Corinthians 5:7 (last part); I Peter 1:19.
3. What was the purpose for this event, and how often were they to observe it? Exodus 13:9, 10.
4. What did Jesus wish before He suffered? Luke 22:15.
5. Describe the ordinance instituted by Jesus during the Last Supper. Matthew 26:26-28.
6. Explain its significance. I Corinthians 11:24-26. How often is it to be commemorated?
7. How did Paul know the time at which this memorial was to be observed? I Corinthians 11:23.
8. By what other act during the Last Supper did Jesus offer us a good example? John 13:13-15.
9. Why is it important that we follow this exemplary action? John 13:5-8, 17.

Conclusion: The solemnity of the Lord's Supper service and the sincerity with which we partake should be of grave concern to each of us. The Scriptures warn of the consequences of partaking unworthily. However, should we refuse, we are denying Him as the sacrifice for our sin. We need to do some diligent study and soul searching to determine our worthiness.

Betrayal and Denial

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 26:14-75; Luke 22:54-62.

Lesson Aim: To show that the actions of those who participated in the betrayal and denial of Jesus reflected a profound weakness of the flesh to stand for a conviction. The only way this weakness can be overcome is by the Spirit of God, through faith.

Introduction: This was a trying time for Jesus' disciples, but how much more of an ordeal was it to be for Jesus. His most trusted disciples were soon to deny Him, and were even to betray Him. Jesus, knowing all of this, warned His disciples of His impending ordeal. He told them that all would be offended because of Him (Matthew 26:31).

Impetuous Peter boasted, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended" (Matthew 26:33). The other disciples quickly confirmed their allegiance to Jesus also. But these promises were merely eloquent words. At the time, the disciples meant it, but how often have professing followers of Jesus said they would never turn their backs on Him, only to fall under pressure?

We can learn a valuable lesson from the experiences of the disciples. Despite their loyal promises to remain true to God under all circumstances, they failed because they did not know themselves or have the proper understanding of the Lord's mission. Pressures revealed the uncertainty of the human heart. One cannot really know just how true he will remain until he is utterly tried and tested. It is always easy to say, "I will remain true to God," before one is severely tested; but after one has been tried and is victorious, he is more confident that his faith will stand firm during future difficulties.

It is our unconquered weaknesses which often lie at the root of our failures. From the disciples' experience, we can see the need for trusting our Lord daily, rather than rely on our own strength. Had the disciples been truly trusting God and had they

been absorbing the lessons of Jesus, they would have understood the reasons for Jesus' ordeal and they would not have been afraid. They were baffled by the events which took place.

Seeing that the disciples did not recognize their weaknesses, we need to pray for understanding and humility, and then trust God to give us the strength to stand in times of trial.

Solomon said, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). Understanding oneself and realizing the limits of our strength is a present need for the people of God. O, that we might look less to ourselves and more to God.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 26:30-56, 58, 69-75; Mark 14:26-72; Luke 22:39-62; John 18:1-27.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What prophecy did David give concerning a "familiar friend," and how was it fulfilled? Psalm 41:9; John 13:18, 26; Matthew 26:14-16.
2. Describe Jesus' feelings soon after His entry into the garden. Matthew 26:38; Luke 22:44. What was the gist of His prayers? Matthew 26:39, 42.
3. Evaluate the reaction of the disciples. Matthew 26:40, 45; Luke 22:45, 46.
4. While Jesus was speaking to His disciples, who joined the group? Mark 14:43. How did Judas plan to betray Jesus? Verse 44.
5. What strange prediction did Jesus make concerning the disciples? Mark 14:27-30. Note Peter's determination.
6. How well did Peter keep his promise of faithfulness? Matthew 26:70, 72, 74. Describe his remorse. Verse 75.

Conclusion: In the final analysis, these incidents were not recorded merely for us to minimize the virtues of the disciples. Rather, they were given to teach a valuable lesson. Any who would rashly denounce the weakness of the disciples should take care lest he become guilty of actions which are just as deplorable. The disciples did not have the advantage of learning from another's mistakes as we have.

Let us be sure that the determination expressed by our mouths is matched consistently by our dedicated action.

Trial and Death

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 27:19-28.

Lesson Aim: To emphasize the most important aspect of Jesus' life—His death—in order that the student may fully comprehend and appreciate Christ's sacrifice for all men.

Introduction: In Jesus' crucial hour he had none to look to for comfort. Only His heavenly Father could help him, but God's will was that He face this awful hour alone. If redemption for mankind was to come, Jesus had to die. There was simply no other way. Every time a sacrificial lamb was slain in the temple, it pointed to Christ, the true lamb who was to be slain to make world redemption possible.

It was a trying hour and an ignominious experience. Think of it! He who had cast out devils, healed the sick, and given sight to the blind, now stood as if He were powerless before His enemies. Jesus was now drinking deep from the wells of shame, reproach, and humiliation. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "... He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

The manner of Jesus' execution was a most shameful one, reserved by the Romans for the worst criminals. In Galatians 3:13 we read: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Although Christ's death was degrading, it was only the prelude to greater glory and exaltation. Philippians 2:9 reveals that "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

Solomon noted that "The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and **before honor is humility**" (Proverbs 15:33; 18:12). True greatness is achieved by overcoming obstacles and enduring humiliation and reproach. Understanding this principle of God's dealing, the Christian can take heart when he is criticized for his faith. God will open to him doors of greater service and honor.

The last question calls for an accurate, detailed outline of events preceding Jesus' death. This should be studied from the narratives of the four Gospels. Give the matter some serious study during the week, and be ready for an enlightening discussion as you enter your weekly class session.

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 27; Mark 14:53-65; 15:1-41; Luke 23; John 18:28-40; 19.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. Recall the first prophecy given regarding the suffering of Christ. Genesis 3:15. Note the details added in Isaiah's prophecy. Isaiah 53:3-5, 7, 8.
2. Give a description of this trial. Matthew 26:59-68.
 - (a) How were witnesses supplied? Evaluate their worth.
 - (b) What was the testimony against Jesus?
 - (c) Give Jesus' reaction. What did He finally say in answer to the accusation?
 - (d) Did this please the high priest and others in the hall?
3. In reference to Luke 23:4-19:
 - (a) Give Pilate's opinion regarding Jesus' guilt.
 - (b) How did Pilate attempt to evade responsibility?
 - (c) Contrast the reactions of Pilate with Herod and his men.
 - (d) After Jesus was returned to Pilate, what alternative was offered the bloodthirsty crowd?
 - (e) What was the crowd's decision?
 - (f) Who was Barabbas?
 - (g) Form an estimate of the character of Pilate.
4. Discuss in detail the journey from Pilate's hall to the actual crucifixion of Jesus. Matthew 27:26-51.

Conclusion: The fact that Jesus' tragic death was prophesied years before in no way detracts from the hideous aspects of the crucifixion. No trial could have been a greater miscarriage of justice. No mistreated individual could have borne the mockery more courageously and honorably. No one ever deserved it less! No greater price could have been paid for our salvation. No sacrifice of a less costly nature would have accomplished the work. No sinner can look at the cross of Calvary and continue to claim innocence. No saved man can view Christ's death and take the Father's love for granted.

The Resurrection of Jesus

"And that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:4).

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 28:1-10.

Lesson Aim: To show that the resurrection is the keystone of the plan of salvation—without His resurrection Christ would have died in vain. As He was raised, so may the Christian look forward to a victory over death also.

Introduction: A recent best-selling book advocated the idea that Christ was not really resurrected, but that His body was removed from the tomb as part of a well-planned plot to clinch the idea of His Messiahship. Modern-day skeptics base their rejection of the resurrection on the fact that current teaching prevalent in the Christian world does not bear out the fact of a Sunday resurrection. How tragic that those who clearly see the fallacy of the Sunday-resurrection teaching, fail to carry their study further but merely reject the whole credibility of the resurrection.

It is important that the time element in the crucifixion and resurrection be correctly determined. Was Christ crucified on Friday and resurrected on Sunday? The Christian must closely examine the sequence of events as related in order to determine what really happened. This lesson will not go into a detailed analysis of these time values; the conscientious Bible student is encouraged to study the tract, "The Elements in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ" before coming to class.

Satan's design in discrediting the resurrection is to weaken the faith of those who rest their faith in the resurrection of Jesus. Satan used this same attack on the believers in Paul's day. Paul proved the fact of the resurrection by his appeal to eyewitnesses, witnesses whose honesty and integrity could not be questioned. Paul's solemn words found in I Corinthians 15:4-8 completely dismiss the idea that Jesus was not really seen by His disciples; they themselves concluded that the One who appeared to them was indeed Jesus.

Paul's words are, "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures; and that he was

seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." What proof could be more conclusive and reliable than that of spirit-filled witnesses?

Supporting References for Lesson Preparation: Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20, 21; I Corinthians 15:1-23.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What sign of His Messiahship did Jesus give to the scribes and Pharisees? Matthew 12:38-40.
2. What did Paul cite as an authoritative source of information concerning the details of the resurrection? I Corinthians 15: 3, 4.
3. Recount the startling event which took place in the end of the Sabbath? Matthew 28:1-6. Note the discovery made by those who visited the tomb early upon the first day of the week. Mark 16:2-6; Luke 24:1-6; John 20:1, 2.
4. Why is Christ's resurrection important? I Corinthians 15:16-19.
5. What may result from wrong teaching about the resurrection? I Timothy 2:8, 16-18; I Corinthians 15:12-15.

Conclusion: Without the glorious victory of the resurrection, the effect of the sacrifice on Calvary would be limited. "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Corinthians 15:17). If He had not been raised, we would have no hope of eternal life. Those who sleep in Jesus would be perished forever. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."