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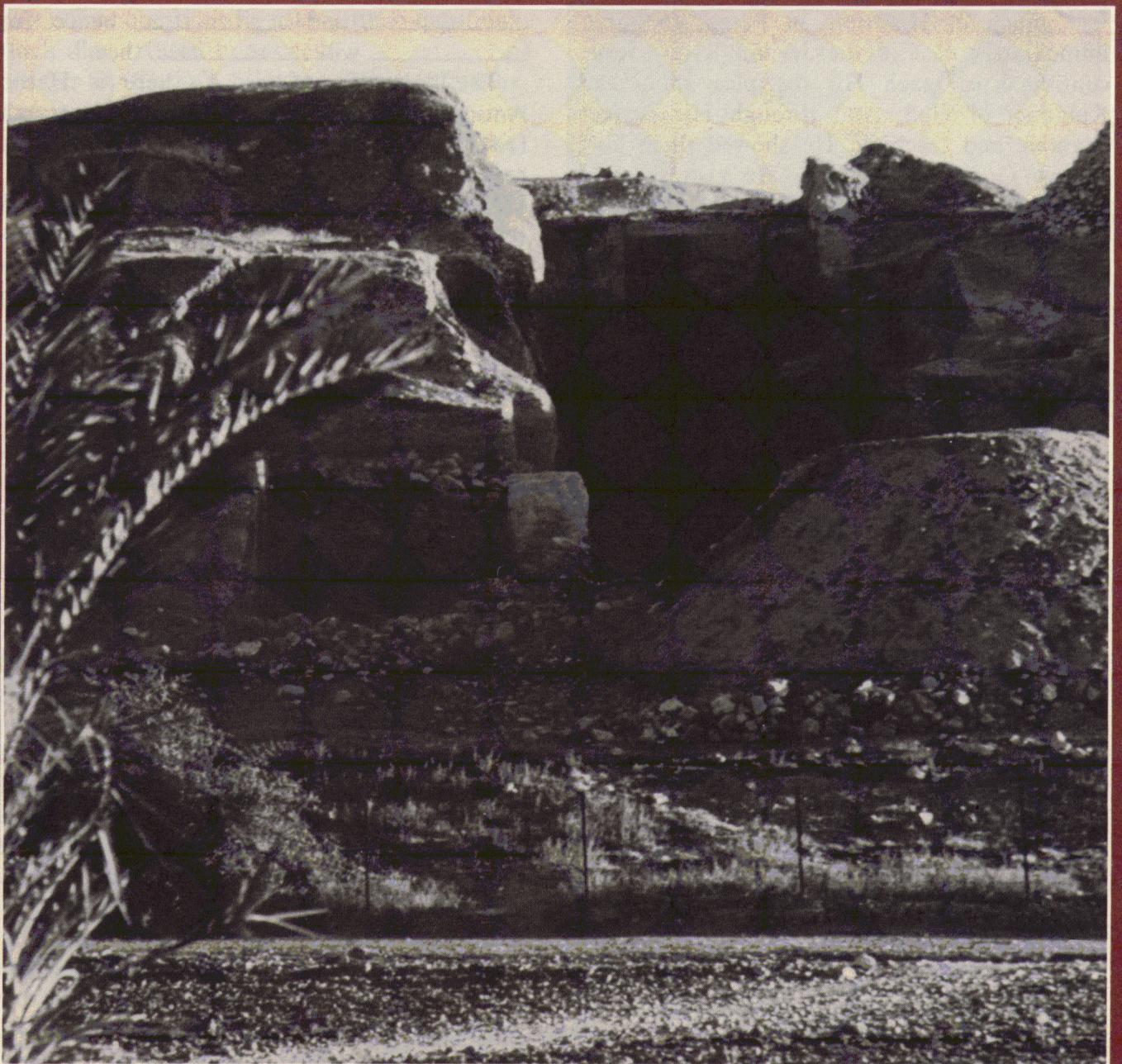
LEVEL 8

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 7



The Training of Christ's Disciples — Part 3

THE TRAINING OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES PART 3

During the final few months of His three and one-half year ministry, Christ spent much of His time in Perea, the area immediately east of the Jordan River. Jesus continued to teach His disciples about the Kingdom of God. And through His perfect example and teaching, He showed them how to live God's way of life. He also severely rebuked the hypocritical religious leaders of His day.

The main account of this period of Christ's ministry, often called the Perean ministry, is found in the book of Luke. Be sure to read through the entire section from Luke 13:22 to Luke 19:28 before continuing this lesson. Doing so will help you better understand the events that took place during these final months of Christ's ministry.

THE PEREAN MINISTRY

Luke's account of Christ's ministry shows that He went through various cities and villages of Perea. The Apostle John indicates the same thing. Notice what he wrote in John 10:40: "And [Jesus] went away again beyond Jordan [the area of Perea] into the place where John [the Baptist] at first baptized; and there he abode."

While in the area, what did certain of the Pharisees warn Christ about? Read Luke 13:31 and fill in the blanks. "The same day there

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

Lying in ruins today, the ancient city of Jericho is about 15 miles (24 kilometers) from Jerusalem. Christ stopped in this city on His way to Jerusalem.

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came certain of the _____, saying unto him, _____, _____, and _____ hence: for _____ will _____ thee."

The "Herod" referred to here is Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. As tetrarch (ruler) of Perea and Galilee, Herod was responsible to the Roman governor in Syria. Herod had already slain John the Baptist, and now wanted to kill Christ.

Read Luke 13:32-33 and summarize Christ's response to the Pharisees who warned him about Herod. _____

Christ later journeyed north into Samaria and Galilee before turning south for His final journey to Jerusalem (Luke 17:11). During this time, thousands of Jews were traveling to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. Many of these pilgrims were in the crowds who listened to Christ.

While on His way toward Jerusalem, Christ passed through the area of Perea once again, as shown in Matthew 19:1-2. "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from _____, and came into the _____ of Judea beyond _____ [Perea]; And great multitudes followed him; and he _____ them there."

Christ eventually reached Jericho (Luke 19:1). From there, as we will learn in the next lesson, He journeyed on to Bethany. And from Bethany He entered Jerusalem.

CONFRONTATION WITH THE PHARISEES

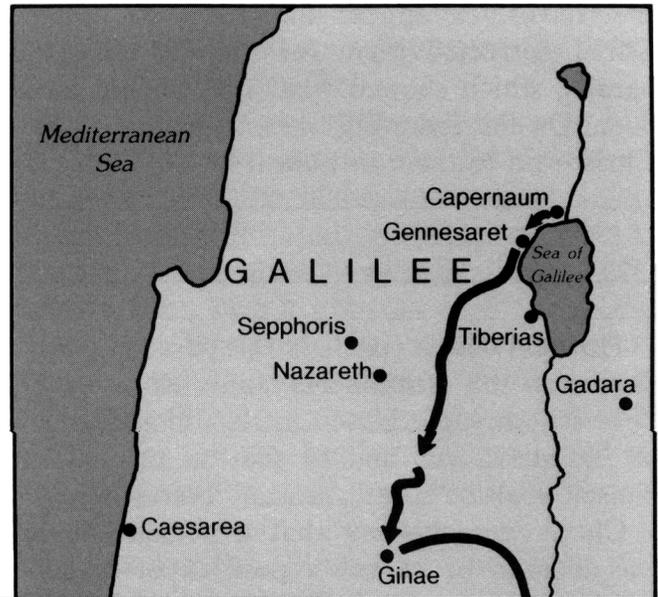
Throughout His ministry, Christ was continually accused of doing wrong by the scribes and Pharisees. They tried to accuse him of disloyalty to the Roman government. They also tried to trick him with cunning biblical questions, hoping to dissuade the crowds from following Him.

In the early part of His ministry, Christ usually avoided outright confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees. He often responded to their clever questions by asking them questions which they refused to answer.

Later in Christ's ministry, His confrontations with the scribes and Pharisees became much more direct. On numerous occasions, He condemned their hypocrisy and deceit. He often contrasted their behavior to the way true Christians should live, in the process teaching His disciples God's way of life.

Him by rescuing a suffering human being on the Sabbath!

CHRIST'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM



Notice the Pharisees' response in Luke 14:6. "And they could _____ him again to these things."

Before the dinner began, Christ watched as the Pharisees chose the best seats for themselves. They were seeking to exalt themselves, to appear important to others. Christ corrected them for this by telling a parable which showed what they should have done. On the following lines, summarize what Christ said to them in Luke 14:8-10. _____

_____.

How did Christ conclude this parable, which illustrates the attitude He wants us to have? "For whosoever _____ himself shall be _____; and he that _____ himself shall be _____" (verse 11).

Christ was showing that a person should not demand or expect a position of leadership and honor. One should not put himself forward or try to look important. Rather, he should humbly accept whatever responsibility he has been given, and then do his best to fulfill it. God will exalt such a person in due time.

RESPECTERS OF PERSONS

Christ knew that the Pharisees liked to associate with people they felt were important. He explained that their only reward for doing so would be the temporary admiration of men. But those who are friends of the poor and handicapped will be rewarded by God at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

Unlike the Pharisees, God is not a respecter of persons. He does not judge people by their looks, their manner of speech or whether they are wearing the latest fashions. Notice what God says in I Peter 1:17. "And if ye call on the Father, who without _____ of _____ judgeth according to every man's _____."

THE GREAT SUPPER

One of the Pharisees at the meal, who heard what Christ had been saying, said to Him, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

Christ responded with a parable about those who would be in God's Kingdom. He told about a rich man who prepared a great supper and invited many people. When the time came for the meal, all those who were invited had excuses as to why they could not attend. The rich man became angry. He then invited the poor and disabled to attend his great banquet (Luke 14:16-24).

Christ was teaching that some people would not respond to His Father's calling. They would be exposed to God's truth, but would not respond because they were too concerned with the material cares of this life.

The religious leaders, who knew and were trained in the Scriptures, seemed to others as the obvious people to be in the Kingdom of God. But because of their hypocrisy and self-righteousness, their places would go to the people they disdained. People who take seriously God's calling and obey Him will be the ones who receive the Holy Spirit and enter God's Kingdom.

THE VALUE OF A REPENTANT SINNER

The scribes and Pharisees often criticized Christ for associating with publicans (tax collectors) and sinners.

Tax collectors were known for their dishonesty in collecting taxes for the Roman government. They would often collect more taxes than was required, keeping the excess for themselves. Tax collectors were looked upon as the dregs of society. For this reason, the scribes and Pharisees refused to associate with them.

When they saw Christ speaking with the tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees criticized Him. They self-righteously said, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke

15:2). Christ responded to their criticism by telling three parables.

Before examining these parables, let's briefly review why Christ often spoke in parables which the masses, including the scribes and Pharisees, did not understand. In Matthew 13:13, Christ explained to His disciples, "Therefore speak I to them in _____: because they seeing _____ not; and hearing they _____ not, neither do they _____."

Christ spoke in parables to actually conceal the meaning of important truths from the masses—not to clearly explain these truths, as many people mistakenly believe. But Christ did explain the meaning of the parables to His disciples.

In Luke 15:1-32, Christ spoke three parables, each showing the importance to Him of even one sinner who repents and begins to obey God. He first compared the repentance of a sinner to a shepherd searching for a lost sheep. Even though ninety-nine sheep are safe, the shepherd still searches for the one that is lost. When he finds the lost sheep, he greatly rejoices.

Christ then compared the repentance of a sinner to a woman who, having ten silver coins, loses one of them. She diligently searches for it until she finds it. She then rejoices with her friends and neighbors when it is found. "Likewise," said Christ in Luke 15:10, "... there is _____ in the presence of the angels of God over _____ that _____."

THE PRODIGAL SON

To further stress the joy there is when a sinner repents, Christ told a third parable. Known as the "Parable of the Prodigal Son," it is found in Luke 15:11-32. In this parable, Christ told about a man who had two sons. The younger son demands his part of the inheritance and promptly leaves home. He squanders the inheritance with riotous living

and is soon reduced to extreme poverty.

During a time of famine he resorts to feeding pigs for a living. So hungry that he would have gladly eaten the pigs' food, the young man realizes how foolish he has been. He returns home and throws himself at his father's mercy, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (verse 21).

The father is moved with compassion by his son's humility and repentance. He welcomes him with a festive homecoming. The elder brother who has faithfully served in his father's business cannot understand why his brother should receive such a welcome.

His father then tells him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet [fitting] that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (verses 31-32).

In this parable, Christ was contrasting the attitude God has toward a *repentant* sinner with the attitude of the Pharisees. The Pharisees completely rejected those whom they saw as inferior, including repentant sinners. But God accepts those who repent of their sins and begin obeying Him. He has great joy at the repentance of even one sinner!

ONE CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS

Christ then taught His disciples that it is impossible to serve God wholeheartedly and at the same time devote all one's efforts trying to make money. In Luke 16:13 Christ said, "No servant can serve _____: for either he will _____ the one, and _____ the other; or else he will _____ to the one, and _____ the other. Ye _____ serve _____ and _____ [money]."

When the Pharisees heard this, they ridiculed Christ. They were lovers of money and would often compromise God's law in their attempts to acquire material wealth.

In a stinging rebuke of their hypocrisy,

Christ told the Pharisees that in spite of their attempts to justify themselves before men, God knew their thoughts. Even though men might respect them because they *appeared righteous*, God was not fooled. Their deceit and hypocrisy was an abomination in God's sight (Luke 16:15).

Even today, men of great wealth are often respected because of their riches. But God does not respect them if they acquire that wealth through dishonest means. On the lines below, list some of the ways men have acquired wealth, and broken God's law in doing so. Then state which of the Ten Commandments were broken. _____

LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

Christ next told the Pharisees a parable which has been misunderstood by many people who believe we go to heaven or hell when we die. The parable is about a rich man who lived in luxury and splendor, and a poor beggar named Lazarus, whose body was covered with sores. In time, both the rich man and the beggar died (Luke 16:22).

Lazarus is described as being in Abraham's bosom—that is, in close fellowship with Abraham. Many people believe this to mean that Lazarus went to heaven. However, as other Scriptures indicate, this is referring to the time when both Lazarus and Abraham, along with true Christians, will be resurrected to eternal life in the first resurrection. This will be at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, when He returns to set up the Kingdom of God on earth.

Next, the rich man is pictured as being in a state of torment. Again, people often misunderstand this to mean that the rich man is being tormented in an eternally burning hell. But this cannot be true, since the Bible plainly shows



YES Photo

It is impossible to serve God wholeheartedly, while devoting all one's efforts to acquiring wealth.

that there is no eternally burning hell. What then does this mean?

The word "hell" in Luke 16:23 comes from the Greek word *hades*, which means "the grave"—a place of burial in the ground. The rich man has been resurrected out of his grave to physical life, not to be in the Kingdom of God as Lazarus, but to be burned up in the lake of fire. In this particular resurrection, which occurs *after* the Millennial rule of Jesus Christ, will be all those who have refused to obey God. They will be cast into the lake of fire to be burned up. They will remain *dead* forever!

The rich man's torment is his realization that he is about to be cast into the lake of fire for refusing to repent of his sins and live God's way of life. He had had his reward in the material things he sought, craved and acquired during his mortal lifetime.

The parable shows a great gulf fixed between those who will be resurrected to immortality, as represented by Lazarus, and those who will be resurrected to be cast into the lake of fire, as represented by the rich man (Luke 16:26). This great gulf cannot be crossed.

This gulf which prevents the wicked from escaping death in the lake of fire, and which also keeps the righteous from being burned up, is *immortality*. Those who are made immortal can never die because they are born of God and are therefore composed of spirit. But human beings who are resurrected to flesh and blood have not been born of God and can be burned up by fire. The rich man, being mortal, will burn up and die the second death.

Finally, realizing he was doomed and that this great gulf existed, the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers lest they would suffer the same terrible fate. Abraham replied that they had the writings of Moses and the prophets. The rich man realized they would not heed these Scriptures. He insisted that if someone from the dead went to his brothers, they would repent.

Abraham replied that if they would not believe the Scriptures, they would not even be persuaded by someone who had risen from the dead (Luke 16:27-31).

Christ taught several lessons by this parable. First, He taught a resurrection from the dead. Second, He illustrated the second death in the lake of fire that shall totally destroy the wicked. And third, He showed that if the scribes and Pharisees, or anyone, refuse to obey the Scriptures, they have no hope of salvation!

For a more detailed explanation of this important parable, read the booklet *Lazarus and the Rich Man*, written by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.

True or False?

Indicate whether the following statements are true or false by placing a T or an F in the spaces provided.

- ___ 1. During the last few months of His ministry, Christ spent much of His time in Perea, the area immediately west of the Jordan River.
- ___ 2. Herod Antipas ruled Perea and Galilee.

- ___ 3. Throughout his ministry, Christ was falsely accused by the scribes and Pharisees.
- ___ 4. We should try to get positions of leadership and honor for ourselves.
- ___ 5. We should seek only the friendships of people we feel are important.
- ___ 6. Christ spoke in parables that were clearly understood by the masses of people who heard them.
- ___ 7. Christ taught that it is possible to serve God wholeheartedly and still devote all of our efforts trying to make money.
- ___ 8. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man shows that people go to heaven or hell when they die.

TEN LEPERS HEALED

During the last few months of Christ's ministry, two dramatic healings took place. These healings further hardened the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees toward Christ.

Upon entering a certain village on his way to Jerusalem, Christ was spotted by ten lepers. Standing afar off, they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" (Luke 17:13).

A common illness in Palestine, leprosy was often a fatal disease, wasting away the skin and limbs of the body. Those who had leprosy had to live separately from healthy people. It was no wonder that these ten lepers, hearing of Christ's healing power, cried out for mercy.

In response to their pathetic appeal, Christ said to them, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." This was a requirement of the law God had given through Moses. The law was that if a person felt he had been cured of leprosy, he had to show himself to the priest who would confirm whether or not he was healed (Leviticus 14:1-3).

The lepers followed Christ's instructions and went to see the priests. While on their way, they were miraculously healed of the disease. Only one of the ten, however, returned to thank

Christ for the healing (Luke 17:15-19).

An important lesson we can learn from this is to never take our blessings for granted, as did the nine lepers who were healed. Like the man who returned to thank Christ, so we should always be grateful for the blessings we receive. Take time to list a few of the many blessings and opportunities you enjoy as a young person.

As Jesus passed through the city of Jericho, a blind man named Bartimaeus sat begging by the roadside (Luke 18:35; Mark 10:46). Hearing the noise of the crowd moving past him, Bartimaeus asked what it meant. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Knowing that Christ could heal him, Bartimaeus tried to get His attention. "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" he shouted.

The crowd tried to silence him, but he only shouted louder. Hearing his pleas for mercy, Christ had the man brought before Him. Christ then asked him what he wanted. Bartimaeus replied, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

Recognizing Bartimaeus's faith that He could heal him, Christ said to him, "Receive thy sight." Immediately the man's eyes were healed. He then followed Christ and glorified God (Luke 18:36-43).

BLESSING OF THE LITTLE CHILDREN

In Luke 18:15-17 and Mark 10:13-16 is found the account of Christ blessing the little children. People had brought their young children to Christ and asked Him to touch, or bless them. When His disciples saw it, they rebuked the people for doing so. But notice what Christ said in Luke 18:16-17. "Suffer [allow] little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of

God. . . . Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

Christ was comparing those who will enter the Kingdom of God with the little children who were brought before Him. He was showing that one must have a humble and childlike attitude if he is to enter the Kingdom of God. Not only are very small children teachable, but they are sweet and innocent. It is this attitude and the lack of hostility and defiance toward authority that Christ wants His people to develop.

After teaching this important lesson, Christ then blessed the little children. He took them up into His arms, put His hands upon them and prayed for them.

Today, the ministers of God's Church follow Christ's example. Each year, they lay hands on the little children in their congregations who have not already been blessed. The ministers ask God to specially protect and bless them as they grow up.

CALLING OF ZACCHAEUS

While passing through Jericho, Christ visited the house of a rich publican (tax collector) named Zacchaeus. He had undoubtedly, like many other tax collectors of his day, had become wealthy by taking advantage of his position.

Being a short man, Zacchaeus had to climb a sycamore tree to get a view of Jesus passing by in the crowd. When Jesus came near the tree, what did He say to Zacchaeus? "Make haste, and come _____; for _____ I must _____ at thy _____" (Luke 19:5).

The scribes and Pharisees again criticized Jesus for being the guest of a tax collector whom they despised. Note what they said in verse 7. "They all murmured, saying, That he [Jesus] was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner."

Zacchaeus, however, had repented of his sins, and had shown his repentance by being

willing to return any money he had unjustly taken from people and give half of his wealth to the poor. He no longer tried to take advantage of anyone.

Christ explained that Zacchaeus's repentant attitude would eventually lead to his entry into the Kingdom of God.

Fill in the Blanks

1. What were lepers who thought they had been cured required to do? _____
2. What is significant about the ten lepers who were healed? _____
3. What kind of attitudes displayed by little children, does Christ want His people to develop? _____

THE NARROW GATE

Christ knew that His training of the disciples was almost complete. During these last months

of His ministry, He continually taught them about the Kingdom of God. He also explained how important it was for them to be sure their own attitudes were pleasing to God.

On one occasion, Christ was asked if only a few would be saved. What was His reply, found in Luke 13:24? "Strive to enter in at the _____ [narrow] gate: for _____, I say unto you, will seek to _____ in, and shall not be _____."

Christ taught that the way to eternal life would not be easy. Many people will hear Christ's teaching, believing that is all they must do to enter the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:25-28). But Christ cautioned the disciples that just listening to what He taught would not be sufficient. Once a person has been called by God, repented and been baptized, he must strive, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, to live the way Christ taught for the rest of his life.

Sometimes it is difficult to resist the influence of those who might want us to break God's laws. Some find it hard to resist the



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Christ's analogy of entering a narrow gate showed that some would not enter the Kingdom of God.

temptation to play sports with other students on the Sabbath. And resisting pressure from schoolmates to smoke, swear, steal or lie may be difficult at times.

It requires courage and effort to stand up for what is right. But Christ will reward those who are striving to do what is right and pleasing in His sight! (On a separate piece of paper, write about an experience you had, when you were forced to make a decision to do either what your peers were doing, or what you knew was right. Did you make the right decision?)

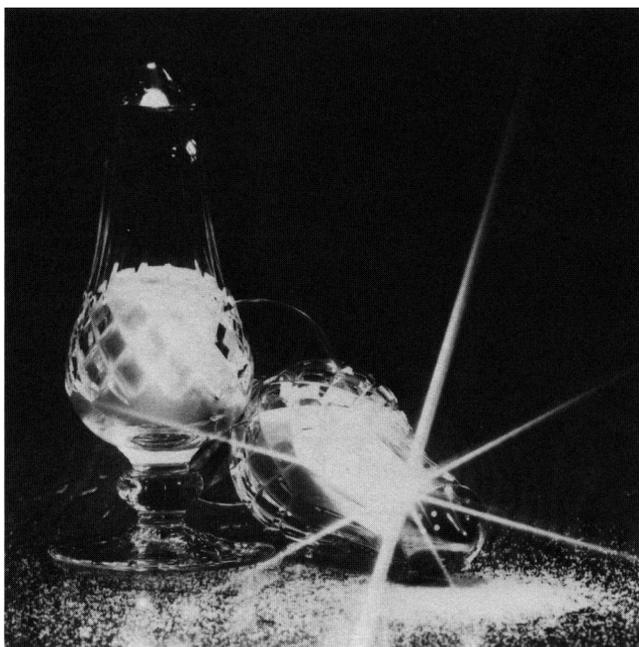
COUNTING THE COST

Turning to the great multitudes that were following Him, Christ said in Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and _____ ["hate" here means to love less by comparison, as the parallel account in Matthew 10:37-38 shows] not his _____, and _____, and _____, and _____, and _____, yea, and his own _____ also, he _____ be my disciple."

Christ was teaching that in order to follow Him, one must put God and obedience to His commandments above all else, including family ties and one's own life, if necessary. In comparison to the love that people have for their families, the love for Christ and His teachings must be much greater.

Jesus further explained that those who would follow Him must first carefully count the cost. To illustrate His point, He asked a question, which is found in Luke 14:28. "For which of you, intending to _____ a _____, sitteth not down _____, and _____, whether he have _____ to _____ it." If a person did not estimate the cost, he might begin to build the tower, but not be able to finish it (verses 29-30).

Jesus then asked whether a king planning to go to war would not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand troops to defeat an enemy with twenty thousand troops.



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The Christian who renounces his commitment to God is like salt that has become spoiled and useless.

If the king decides he is unable, he would send a delegation to ask for conditions of peace from his enemy (verses 31-32).

Christ was showing that in order to be one of His disciples or followers, one must be willing to give up his past sinful way of life. He must decide whether he is prepared to commit himself to wholehearted obedience to God, striving to obey Him for the rest of his life.

In Luke 14:34, Jesus concluded this teaching by showing that if salt is spoiled and loses its saltiness, it becomes useless. In the same way, a Christian who gives up and renounces his commitment to God has failed.

This principle applies to every aspect of our lives. Before committing ourselves to anything, we must make sure we fully understand what is required to successfully complete the project. Once we have committed ourselves, we should see the project through to its completion.

AN UNPROFITABLE SERVANT

Christ also taught His disciples what it means to be a profitable servant. He asked them whether a servant who only fulfills the responsibilities he is paid to do should receive

special thanks. He explained that those who do only what is required of them will be called unprofitable or unworthy servants (Luke 17:7-10).

Whenever we are given a job to do, we should always try to do our very best. We should try to go above and beyond what is expected of us. This makes us praiseworthy and a real asset to our teachers, parents and employers.

THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

To teach His disciples the importance of always praying and never losing faith, Christ told them a parable about a persistent widow. The widow continually asked an unjust judge to give her justice against an adversary who had wronged her. For some time, he refused to help her, but he finally gave in because of her persistence (Luke 18:1-8).

Christ was showing the disciples through this parable how much more God, who is just and fair, will hear the repeated prayers of His people who cry for justice. He will not ignore them, as the unjust judge tried to do.

Christ then asked His disciples whether He would find such faith among His people when He returns to earth at His Second Coming (verse 8). This is a challenge for us today. Will we, who live in the days just prior to Christ's return, have the same faith in Him as the apostles who had walked and talked with Him? Use scriptures to show how we may have that same faith. _____

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Christ next gave a parable as a warning to those who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down upon others.

He spoke of two men who went into the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. He said, "God, I thank

thee, that I am not as other _____ are, extortioners, _____, adulterers, or even as this _____. I _____ twice in the week, I give _____ of all that I possess" (Luke 18:11-12).

But the publican stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven as he prayed, but beat upon his chest and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (verse 13).

Christ explained that the publican went home forgiven by God, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee. He told His disciples this parable to show them that a proud and self-righteous person who exalts himself, will be humbled by God. However, a person who approaches God in humility, realizing his own faults and shortcomings, will eventually be exalted by God (verse 14).

We have been able to study only the highlights of the many lessons Christ taught His disciples during this latter part of His ministry. We should do our best to learn these lessons and apply them in our own lives.

In the next lesson we will study the final events in Christ's life and His keeping of the Passover.

Fill in the Blanks

1. What did Christ mean when He spoke of the "narrow gate"? _____

2. What did Christ mean by "counting the cost"? _____

3. Explain the difference between a "profitable servant" and an "unprofitable servant." _____

4. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, explain who was forgiven and why. _____

BIBLE MEMORY

Luke 13:24 Luke 17:10
 Luke 14:11 Luke 18:17
 Luke 14:34

WORD MAZE PUZZLE

Fill in the missing words below, noting the number of letters in each. Arrange the words in their proper places in the diagram below. The first answer has been filled in for you.

1. Name of the time period covered by this lesson. ____
2. "And, behold, there are ____ which shall be first, and there are ____ which shall be last" (Luke 13:30).
3. Who was the fox? ____ (Luke 13:31-32).
4. The man Christ healed on the Sabbath suffered from ____ (Luke 14:2).
5. "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be ____; and he that humbleth himself shall be ____" (Luke 14:11).
6. The ____ continually accused and taunted Christ (Luke 16:14).
7. "But if the ____ have lost his ____, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" (Luke 14:34).
8. "He that is faithful ____ that which is ____ is faithful also in ____:" (Luke 16:10).
9. "If thy brother trespass against thee, ____ him; and if he ____, forgive him" (Luke 17:3).
10. Christ met the ten lepers in the midst of ____ and ____ (Luke 17:11-12).
11. "For it is easier for a ____ to go through a ____'s ____, than for a ____ man to enter into the ____ of God" (Luke 18:25).
12. "Unto every one which hath shall be ____; and from him that ____ not, even that he hath shall be ____ away ____ him" (Luke 19:26).
13. Christ's final destination was the city of ____.

