



According to Luke--II

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Introduction

Luke was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus. He wrote his gospel after much research and many interviews. He carefully records the fact that these sources were eyewitnesses of the events recorded (see Luke 1:2). He includes information about Mary the mother of Jesus that no other gospel records and gives greater prominence to women than the other authors. Luke's writing is the most polished of the New Testament. He gives more attention to social issues of the day. He calls attention to the private prayer life of Jesus. Luke also writes with a view toward the historical setting. He establishes the date of Jesus' ministry very carefully (see Luke 3:1 & 2). During the next year we will study the writing of Luke, first from his gospel and then from his record of the Acts of the Apostles.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This is the sixteenth in a series of twenty quarterlies (5 years) covering the greater part of the historical portion of the Bible. Now available are:

The Men and Women of Genesis
Lessons From Exodus
Wilderness Examples
Possessing the Land of Promise
The Days of the Judges
Israel's Early Kings
Lessons From the Kings
The Captivity and Return
The Miracles of Jesus
The Parables of Jesus
The Personal Ministry of Jesus
Matthew: The King and His Kingdom I & II
According to Luke I & II
We Beheld His Glory (John I)
Full of Grace & Truth (John II)
Holy Ghost Acts I & II

Parable of the Great Supper

Read: Luke 14:1-35

Memory Work: 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. (Luke 14:23)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *A critical spirit blinds hearts so that they cannot see and understand properly.*
2. *Worldly society stands upon the love of honor and material recompense; but the society of the kingdom of God stands upon sincere service and heavenly reward.*
3. *The Gospel invitation is to be taken seriously and responded to immediately. No excuse is acceptable.*
4. *Jesus set the cost of true discipleship very high. He needs loyal followers who will not turn back for any reason whatsoever.*
5. *Our Lord is building a heavenly temple and making war on the prince of this world. His followers must be totally dedicated.*

I A Double Standard: The events of this lesson take place shortly before Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem. It was a sabbath day and Jesus was invited to dine with one of the chief Pharisees. It was a formal occasion, for invitations had been given. The Pharisee had also invited a sick man who had dropsy. The treachery of the Pharisee is evident. He knew that Jesus would see the sick man and would heal him even though it was the sabbath day. For that, the Pharisee would indict the Lord. But when Jesus saw the unfortunate man, He asked those present if it was lawful to heal on the sabbath day. When they did not answer, Jesus took the poor man and healed him and sent him away. Then He exposed the hypocrisy of His critics. He asked them if their ox or ass had fallen into a pit, if they would not lift it out despite the sabbath day. They knew very well the answer to Jesus'

question and so were silenced. Note also that the Pharisee who wanted to accuse Jesus of breaking the sabbath, had a formal supper on the sabbath which must have occasioned his servants to labor on the holy day. How a critical spirit blinds! Those who come to the house of the Lord to look for occasion to criticize will find it no doubt, but in so doing they blind themselves to the light of God.

II Of Motives and Manners: At the sabbath day supper Jesus watched as the Jews contended for the places of honor at the tables. He quoted from the Proverbs (25:6), advising them to choose the least honorable place so that they would not be embarrassed by being asked to step down. The system of worldly honor stinks in the sight of God. Even in the church, among ministers of the Gospel, the host Pastor must be so careful to seat the visiting brethren in the proper order lest one be offended. Our reason for living should be to serve and not to receive honor from men.

The governor of Ohio was once the guest in the Lehr home in Ada, Ohio. He was to be the guest of honor at the formal supper that night. Sarah, the young daughter was to escort the governor to the table. She nervously made the unpardonable mistake of seating him to the left of the host instead of the proper honorable place at the right. This insulted dignitary sulked for a moment and then left the table and retired to his room. That is the society of this world. Doesn't it make you sick? All honor and pretense.

The Lord advised his host to invite the poor and the handicapped to his dinners. They would not be able to reciprocate and so he would have his reward at the resurrection of the just. Let us consider the motive for our hospitality. We ought never to invite guests to show off our homes or tables, and never to try to outdo someone else. So much of society is involved in just such nonsense today. Let us be warned. May our hospitality be motivated by a sincere desire to serve and to help.

III The Gospel Feast: One of the guests who got the point of Jesus' remarks, exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." This one must have been sick of all the scheming and conniving for honor in the never ending circle of society among the Pharisees. He realized what a relief it would be to be rid of all the pressure of this superficial honor. In response to this statement Jesus told a story. It was of a certain man who made a feast and invited many. At the proper time he sent out his servant to call them for "all things are ready." But the invited guests were not inclined to come. With one accord they all gave excuses. One had bought land and just then had to go to see it. This one was either a fool or a liar. Another had purchased a yoke of oxen and was going to try them. A gift horse, one does not look in the mouth, but if you are purchasing an

animal, you certainly prove it before you pay for it. This one was as foolish or deceitful as the first. The third had just been married and that was his excuse. Did it never occur to him to bring his wife along? These were all excuses. There is a great difference between a reason and an excuse. The problem with these three was that they did not **want** to go to the feast. Isn't that why those who will not come to Jesus for salvation today, make excuses? Some hypocrite offends them. The church is after their money. They are just as good or better than others who attend church regularly. People are not friendly enough. There is too much to do to allow two hours for attending worship. All excuses! These are not reasons, but only excuses. The first fellow in our Lord's story was concerned about his pleasure and lust. Are not these things still keeping those whom the Lord has called to the Gospel supper from responding to His call?

Next is a terrible warning. The Lord of the parable sends out his servant to get the poor, the lame, the handicapped and the blind. Then he sends the servant once more to compel passing travelers to come in until every seat is filled, for he will not allow any of those who were originally bidden to taste the great supper. No doubt, Jesus intended this to be a warning to the Jewish people who were the first to be bidden to partake of the Gospel. When they did not come, the door was opened to the Gentiles. They came, and the poor and the needy are still coming, while few indeed of the "chosen people" have come to the Gospel feast. But this should also be taken as a warning to any and all who hear the Gospel invitation to come at once and not find excuses. Today if you hear His voice come at once lest the invitation be withdrawn and you never again have opportunity to eat bread in the kingdom of God.

IV The Cost of Discipleship: The Lord is looking for absolute loyalty and consecration among His disciples. He cannot afford to have those as His fellow workers who turn back or give up at every trial and temptation. He is the builder which has counted the cost, and He is the Captain leading the fight against the gates of hell. The Lord spoke of Himself as the builder and warrior in response to Peter's confession at Caesarea-Philippi when He said, "...on this rock will I **build** my church and the gates of hell shall not **prevail** against it." In order for us to be His disciples we must be totally dedicated to His cause of building His church and destroying the works of the enemy. The passage here about "counting the cost" is not directed to the disciples but is an explanation of why the requirements for discipleship are so severe. Jesus is the one that has counted the cost of building the church. He has considered how to meet the adversary on his own ground and defeat him. The Lord's considered conclusion is that He must have total allegiance and total dedication. Anyone who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is unworthy.

Anyone who is not willing to sacrifice the comforts of this life cannot be His disciple. Whoever is not willing to forsake houses and lands and mother and father and all loved ones for the sake of the Gospel is not fit for the kingdom.

Jesus said it several times: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." It's not the cross of Jesus we must bear, but our own cross. Often people speak of their sickness or weakness or uncomfortable situation as their cross. That is not what Jesus meant. Our cross must be understood in the context of Jesus' cross. He died on that cross to save others. Our cross is to sacrifice self to serve Christ and the people. The world lives for self. The disciple lives for Christ and His people.

The Lord set these severe standards for discipleship because He needed men and women whom He could count on. He was not after crowds. Often when great crowds were around Jesus He gave such strong teaching that they melted away. "This is an hard saying, who can hear it," they said. But those few who did stick with Him won the battle and built the church through the Spirit of Christ. The church needs to set their priorities right today. It is not quantity that the Lord desires, but quality. To lower the demands to gain the acceptance of the crowd is to miss the point. We must preach the cross. Total self-denial will open the door to true discipleship!

Rejoicing in Heaven over Repentant Sinners

Read: Luke 15

Memory Work: I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *The three parables were intended to rebuke the Pharisees' attitude against the publicans and sinners.*
2. *Heaven rejoices over every lost one that is found.*
3. *The Heavenly Father runs to meet His penitent sons.*
4. *We must be careful not to repel sinners who are coming to Christ.*

I Reason for the Parables: The scribes and Pharisees constantly found fault with Jesus because He spoke and ate with publicans and sinners. When Jesus called Levi (also called Matthew) from the receipt of custom, to follow Him, Levi made a feast and invited a great company of publicans (tax collectors) and other sinners. The scribes and Pharisees demanded to know why Jesus and His disciples ate and drank with sinners. Jesus explained that the healthy people do not need a physician, but the sick; and that He was come, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:27-32 & Matthew 9:9-13).

A similar scene took place when a sinful woman annointed Jesus' feet with an alabaster ointment at a feast which Simon, a Pharisee, made for Jesus. He said to himself, "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." But Jesus knew very well who and what the woman was, and he knew, too, that she was penitent. Simon's attitude, like that of the scribes and Pharisees in general, was frozen into a cold, rigid disdain of every publican and harlot. Jesus had faith for their recovery (Luke 7:36-50).

When Jesus visited Zacchaeus at Jericho, again there was criticism of Jesus because He went to be the guest of one who was a publican and a sinner. But through that visit

of Jesus salvation came to Zacchaeus and his house (Luke 19:1-10). The Pharisees and experts in the law disdained these publicans and sinners in such a way that they made it almost impossible for one of them to repent and start a new life. The Lord rebuked them sharply for their "holier-than-thou" attitude on several occasions. "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke 11:52). Jesus warned the chief priests and elders of the Jews that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before they would (Matthew 21:28-32).

II Joy over one sinner that repenteth: With three parables, Jesus attempted to show the Pharisees how wrong their attitude was. He pointed out how a shepherd that lost one of his hundred sheep would leave the ninety and nine and go out to seek for the lost one. When that sheep was found the shepherd would rejoice and celebrate with his friends over the recovery of that lost sheep. Jesus emphasized the fact that there is "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). The point should have been clear to the Pharisees, that the rescue of a lost sinner was a great cause for rejoicing. They chose, however, to freeze the publicans and sinners out of fellowship with their icy attitude of disdain. Jesus told a similar story on another occasion to His disciples to illustrate the high regard He had for little children (Matthew 18:10-14).

The second parable Jesus used described a woman who had lost a silver coin. She searched and swept the house until she found it. When it was found she had to tell her friends and neighbors and she expected them to rejoice with her over the recovery of the coin. Surely the salvation of a lost soul is greater cause for rejoicing than the recovery of a misplaced coin. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

The third illustration Jesus used, the parable of the prodigal son, has been evaluated by literary experts as the greatest short story ever written. Aside from its literary genius, it is filled with valuable spiritual lessons. The story is often thought of as that of a man with two sons, one good and one bad. Actually it is a story of a man with two sons, both bad, but one is restored. The younger son, asked for his portion of the father's legacy and then went and wasted it on wine, women, and song. The profligate spending exhausted the inheritance quickly, and when nothing was left a mighty famine reduced the errant son to desperate circumstances. In his extremity he took a job to herd swine. So far down had he fallen that he was about to feed on the pigs' food. But he "came to himself" and realized that the servants in his father's home which he had so recently de-

spised, were far better off than he was in his present predicament. He determined that he would "eat humble pie" (instead of pig slop) and return to his father. He composed and rehearsed his sincere apology and hoped that dear old Dad would at least let him return home as a servant, for he was unworthy any longer to be considered a son.

III A warm welcome: When the son was still a great way off, the father, who obviously was looking for the lost son, saw him and had compassion on him and ran and embraced him and kissed him. The penitent boy began to recite his practised speech, but he never finished, for the excited father called for his servants to bring the best robe in the house, a ring for his finger, shoes for his feet, and a fatted calf for a joyful occasion!

But there was one fly in the ointment. As so often happens at joyful celebrations one sourpuss was in a stew because of the honor given to this waster. That was the elder brother outside, refusing to join in the joyful celebration. You know how he felt, don't you? "Here I am faithfully performing my duties every day and no one even notices me. And here comes this wicked runaway that caused us so much grief and anguish and what do they do? They make him a feast. What have I worked so hard for, to be ignored and insulted? Phooey! I won't go to the party."

The father himself came to the older son and begged him to come in and join in the joyful celebration. "Son thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine," he explained, "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).

The story ends there with the elder brother still outside despite the father's pleading. The message was clear enough. The scribes and Pharisees ought to rejoice over the rescue of harlots and publicans and sinners from their evil ways, even as all heaven rejoices at the return of a wandering soul. Certainly if the rescue of a lost sheep, or the finding of a misplaced coin was cause for rejoicing, the salvation of a lost soul should be infinitely greater reason for joy. The prodigal son, who represents the publicans and harlots, at least and at last came to himself and returned, repentant, to the Father. But the older brother, who represents the scribes and Pharisees, never awakens to the evil of his wrong attitude. We are left in doubt of his recovery from his self-centered superiority.

IV Let us not hinder or offend: The attitude of the scribes and Pharisees has not disappeared with their culture. Faithful "super-saints" today sometimes find fault with sinners and seekers who are just coming to Jesus. Let us be sure not to put stumbling blocks in the way of young people who, though they may have many lessons still to learn, are at least on their way, returning to the Heavenly Father.

It is worthy of note that when Jesus ate and conversed with the publicans and harlots, there were always results from His contact. Levi the publican became Matthew the apostle. Zacchaeus repented and made restitution. The sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet could "go in peace" for her sins which were many were forgiven. The fact that Jesus ate and drank with publicans and sinners is not to be taken as license for us to attend every wild celebration we know of. Remember, although Jesus did attend several feasts made by sinners, He always came away with converts. Then, too, remember that Jesus did not choose sinners as His constant companions. He chose to spend His short time with 12 disciples who loved Him and believed in Him. Let us also choose for our closest friends, disciples of Jesus who love and serve Him. Finally, let it also be noted that Jesus spent many a long night in lonely prayer to the Father in heaven which brought to Him the power to bring blessing to the publicans and sinners. Let us, too, spend much time in the presence of God so that when we do have contact with sinners, they shall not defile us, but we shall bring blessing and salvation to them. Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth!

Teaching on Stewardship

Read: Luke 16:1-31

Memory Work: No man 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)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *We must learn how to use money in ways that please the Lord and bring us eternal blessings.*
2. *Money---riches---material things are the foremost contender for the affection of our hearts.*
3. *The poor and the suffering and the afflicted are much more disposed to respond to the Gospel invitation than the rich and the mighty of this world.*

I Make to yourselves friends: Jesus had been speaking to the scribes and Pharisees. The entire narrative of Luke from chapter 14:1 through 17:10 seems to have taken place on a Sabbath day in Perea just before Jesus came to Jerusalem to lay down His life. The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son, were directed at the Pharisees to reprove their disdainful attitude toward publicans and sinners. Jesus emphasized the value of one repentant sinner by declaring that there was joy in heaven over such. Now Jesus included His disciples in the teaching He gave. The Pharisees listened also. Our Lord told a story about an unfaithful steward. This man had been entrusted with the oversight of his master's accounts. He was not faithful to his master. He was dishonest. No doubt, he was embezzling money for himself. He was called before his employer to give account of his dealings. We might say, his books were audited. He realized that his dishonesty would be discovered and that he would lose his job. So before the day of accountability arrived he cleverly made friends for himself of those who owed his master money. He reduced their indebtedness. In this way, he shrewdly reasoned, that when he was discharged these friends which he had won for himself by his scheming, would take him in.

Luke tells us that the Lord commended this dishonest steward. We must understand, of course, that the Lord was not commending the crooked steward's dishonesty, but rather his shrewd foresight. The Master wanted to inspire foresight for eternity in His disciples. Jesus said that the children of this world are more clever in their generation than the children of the kingdom of God. The Lord is teaching here the proper use of money. It is not money itself which is the root of all evil, but the love of money (1 Tim. 6:10). This crooked steward had the foresight to use his master's money to win friends for himself that would help him in the future. The children of the kingdom of God should learn to so use their money that it will win them friends in the heavenly kingdom. Money can be used selfishly or hoarded; or it can be used generously to further the kingdom of God and to help the needy around us. In so doing, the Lord indicated we may lay up treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33-34). Money is entrusted to us to be used. When we get to the gates of heaven, will there be some there to welcome us who have been won for the Lord with the help of funds we have given for the work of God? Money is neither bad nor good of itself. It is our attitude toward it and our use of it which has the potential for good or evil. Let us look forward. Today the children of this generation study to invest their funds in such a way that they will overcome the waste of inflation and the bite of taxes. He is esteemed most clever who makes the most with the least and pays no tax. May we, as children of the kingdom of God, perceive the advantage of investing in the eternal bonds of generosity and support of the work of God.

II Ye cannot serve God and mammon: The Lord declared that our faithfulness in the use of money is an indication of our faithfulness in all matters of the kingdom. If we are faithful in money matters, He will entrust us with the true riches of His kingdom. The Lord repeated here for His disciples as well as for the scribes and Pharisees, the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount: "No man can serve two masters---Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13 & Matt. 6:24). Yet how many Christians find some way to rationalize their own service to God and to mammon. The Lord says it cannot be done. We better believe it and quit serving materialism. All that we possess, we must hold as stewards for our Lord. We must be ready at His command to give all. In this world we are to recognize ourselves as pilgrims, just passing through on a period of probation; and as stewards of our Lord's goods. We are to be attached to nothing. Because of the great materialism of our society this teaching appears idealistic and impractical. But the moment we pass to the hereafter all is changed. Serve the Lord! Do all for Him! Be good stewards and invest for eternity! Personal gain should never be the foremost consideration in our choices and decisions, but rather service for God. Remember it---make a motto---keep it

before your eyes continually---**YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON.**

III Comforted or tormented: When the Pharisees heard what Jesus taught they made faces and ridiculed Him. They equated prosperity with the blessing of God. Furthermore, they were covetous themselves. They loved to gain wealth. The Lord told them that that which was highly esteemed by men: that is prosperity and honor, etc., was an abomination in the sight of God. To be a child of the kingdom of heaven costs something. There is the necessity to renounce this world and its values and to "press" into God's kingdom.

Neither Luke nor the Lord Jesus said that the illustration the Lord used next was a parable. It is certainly possible that Jesus was drawing back the curtain from very real life and death and thereafter happenings. The beggar in this illustration is named by Jesus and, of course, Abraham is a very real character. No parable which Jesus told gives names to its representative characters. At any rate, we cannot positively say that this was only a story Jesus told.

The illustration concerns two men. The one was extremely wealthy, living in flamboyant style, satisfying every desire. He was living for himself. Just outside the gate of his palatial home sat an unfortunate beggar, Lazarus. He was covered with sores. He was hungry and hoping always to get the crumbs which fell to the floor from the rich man's table. But the dogs were more kind to Lazarus than the rich man, for they came and licked his sores.

The great difference in their earthly circumstances did not affect the grim reaper, for both of them died. The rich man could not bribe death to go away. When Lazarus died, the Lord revealed, he was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. No doubt, those who knew him commented knowingly that poor Lazarus was better off now. No more pain and suffering. Probably he was not even buried. His body may have been burned at the dumping place in the valley of Hinnom. The rich man, however, had a great funeral and was buried. No doubt, many mourned his untimely death. What a successful man he was. His story could have been written up to inspire the youth of the younger generation to work hard and make it like he did.

But death did not end the story for either character. While Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom, the rich man awoke in hell and in torment. Now he noticed Lazarus. He asked that the beggar be sent to relieve his suffering. But father Abraham explained that there was a great gulf between them and there was no possibility of passage from one place to the other. This teaching of Jesus rules out the possibility of such a place as a "purgatory." Abraham also reminded the rich man how he had enjoyed the good things during his lifetime, while Lazarus had plenty of only suffering. Now the beggar was

comforted and the rich man tormented. Lazarus was not saved because he was a sick beggar, of course. But his circumstances disposed him to be responsive to the invitation of the Gospel. On the other hand the rich man did not go to hell because he was rich, but because he lived for self and did not accept God's redemption. The riches predisposed him, no doubt, to be self reliant. He could buy whatever he wanted. He may have even deceived himself into believing that his very prosperity was the sign of God's blessing and approval of his life.

Now, after death, the rich man thinks of someone else. He thinks of his five brothers and wants Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to warn them that they repent and be delivered from coming to that place of torment where he found himself. His request was denied. They had the word of God from Moses and the prophets. If they would not respond to that word neither would they repent at the miraculous resurrection of Lazarus. Note that there was no joking about hell from the rich man. He did not want his friends and brothers to come to give him good company. In this illustration hell is a very real place and the torment unbearable.

Remember that Jesus taught that riches make salvation difficult though not impossible. Let us be careful that we do not make our own personal salvation more difficult by desiring to be rich. And let us take the instruction of Jesus regarding the proper use of the money and material things which we do have, that we use them to win us friends which will receive us into everlasting habitations and give us treasure in heaven.

Second Coming Teaching

Read: Luke 17:1-37

Memory Work: For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven: so shall also the Son of man be in his day. (Luke 17:24)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *We must be exceedingly careful that we do not cause anyone to turn from the Lord into evil by carelessness or hypocrisy.*
2. *The disciples of Jesus must always be willing and anxious to forgive those who have done wrong.*
3. *As servants of the Lord we are not to look for thanks or rewards for our service, but consider ourselves "unprofitable servants." Our Lord will honor and reward as He sees fit.*
4. *The Lord expects us to be grateful and thankful for His gifts and blessings.*
5. *When the Lord is revealed from heaven at His second coming, there will be a sudden judgment of the wicked. The wicked are to be taken and judged while the righteous remain.*

I Woe to those who offend: The first ten verses of Luke chapter 17 conclude the events of the Sabbath afternoon which began to be described in chapter 14. Here He warns the disciples that there will always be stumbling blocks in this world. It cannot be otherwise until the Lord returns and gathers out all things that offend. But the Lord warns His disciples that it is a very serious offence to cause "one of these little ones" to stumble and fall. In the gospel of Matthew the Lord used similar language in referring to little children, but here it seems He is indicating that the sinners whom the Pharisees so despised are the "little ones." The Lord gives a tremendously strong warning here. He says that it would be better for anyone to have a millstone hung on their neck and to be cast into the

sea, rather than to cause someone to fall away from the Lord.

We must consider then how we could cause young Christians to be offended. The main stumblingblock is surely hypocrisy. When Christians live contradictory to their profession they are an offense. How many seekers have been stumbled by professing believers because they did not live as they professed. Some years ago a well-known minister of the Gospel went to South Africa. As he worked with natives there he lost his temper and struck one of them. His ministry was finished. The story spread all over the country. He was never again taken seriously. He repented deeply, but only after several years did he become an effective minister again, and then not in South Africa. Professing to be children of the heavenly kingdom and then coveting the material things of this world is a serious contradiction and may cause some to stumble. The pleasures we allow ourselves and our personal habits all must be consecrated to the Lord with this teaching in mind. May God help us that we may never stumble another believer.

II Offorgiving: Next the Lord teaches that if someone does wrong to us, that we should rebuke him. Perhaps he will repent and then we are to forgive him. Even if he wrongs us seven times in one day and says that he is sorry, we are to forgive. The contrast with the former teaching is interesting. For ourselves, we are to be very demanding, that we do not offend anyone. But with those who may wrong us we are to be very generous with our forgiveness. How Christlike this is. He forgives so readily and completely. Let us ask for grace to be as forgiving as our Lord. And let that forgiveness be "from the heart." The Lord casts our sins behind His back, removes them as far as the east is from the west and buries them in the deepest sea. When we forgive let us forget also. The Spirit of Christ alone can create such a forgiving spirit in us.

III The servants' proper attitude: When the apostles heard this teaching they cried out for the Lord to increase their faith. What a good response this was. This is exactly what faith is intended to accomplish. Our faith must be active and accomplish the impossible. Certainly faith is not simply the acceptance of some creed and points of doctrine. If faith does not effect changes in me and in situations it is of no real value. The disciples needed greater faith to be forgiving as Jesus had taught and so do we.

Jesus explained that the real need was not a larger quantity of faith, but a faith that was alive and active. Faith as a grain of mustard seed could remove a sycamine tree to the sea. The mustard seed has life in it. Our faith must be alive also.

When our faith had done the impossible, Jesus warned, we must not become proud and boastful. We are to remember that we are His servants and are here to do His will.

Jesus used a little illustration of slaves plowing or herding cattle. He reasoned that the slave owner would not thank his slaves for the work they accomplished and invite them to come to eat supper. Rather he would tell them to make ready the supper and serve him. Then, after he was satisfied, he would allow them to eat. He does not thank them for doing the things they were commanded to do because they are his slaves. We are to consider ourselves to be His slaves. We are neither to expect thanks nor reward for doing what our Lord commands us. We are to consider ourselves as unprofitable servants. That is our proper attitude.

On the other hand, the Lord reveals that when He returns and finds His servants faithfully performing their duties and watching and waiting for Him, that He will gird Himself and make His servants to sit down to meat while He Himself will come forth to serve them. What an interesting contrast! We are to consider ourselves unprofitable servants; but He will put on the apron of service and minister to us. Let us be sure that we adopt the proper attitude. Jesus will not fail to fulfill His intentions of love and mercy toward us. Even a cup of water given in the name of the Lord will not lose its reward.

IV Where are the nine?: It must have been at this time that Jesus was called to Bethany where Lazarus was sick and then died. After raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus went north again. While on the border of Galilee and Samaria ten lepers found Jesus. Since they were unclean and isolated from the uninfected they called to Jesus from a distance. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," they cried. Notice that although Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with each other, the common calamity of leprosy had removed those prejudices. Their common need overcame those divisions. One was a Samaritan. When Jesus heard their cry, He responded by telling them to go to the priest and show themselves to him. This was the law concerning reentry into society for a cleansed leper, as recorded in Leviticus. Note on this occasion the Lord did not touch them as He had another leper whom He healed at another time. The Lord is not bound to do everything the same way every time. He deals differently with different individuals. Now as they went they were cleansed. What an exciting discovery that must have been for the ten. Nine of them speeded up to show themselves to the priest, but one came to an abrupt halt; about faced and ran back to Jesus to thank Him. The one was the Samaritan. "Where are the nine," Jesus asked? It shows how our Lord expects gratefulness and thanks for His blessings and figs. Let us be sure that we are not neglectful to thank and praise Him for His many benefits.

V When is the kingdom: The skeptical Pharisees demanded of Jesus when His king-

dom would appear. Their question was scornful and derisive. Jesus explained that the kingdom of God was among them. They looked for a political kingdom to overthrow the rule of Rome and establish Israel as the world power. This horrible misconception persists to this day not only among Jews but even in many evangelical Christian groups. Jesus explained that the heavenly kingdom was not a material kingdom. It would not become evident to those who were looking with hostility for it. Jesus declared that the kingdom was even then among them. That was true because the King was there. But He explained that before the kingdom would be revealed in its fulness, the Son of man would suffer and be rejected. The Lord explained that the manifestation of His kingdom in the end time would be sudden and without warning signs. He warned that His followers should not look back like Lot's wife. When the kingdom suddenly is revealed, Jesus said that some would be taken and that some would be left. This scripture is often horribly twisted to fit the strange doctrine of a secret rapture. Anyone reading with understanding will recognize that there is nothing secretive about the manifestation of the kingdom of God. It will be like lightning shining from east to west. When the Lord spoke of one being taken and the other left He meant that the wicked (all that offends) were to be taken to judgment; while the righteous will remain to shine as the sun in the kingdom of God. G. Campbell Morgan explains: "The one taken is the one that is punished, not the one left."

At Pentecost, the kingdom of God came among humanity. We are now living in God's present kingdom. He is King. According to our faith, our King works and overcomes, even now, all the power of the enemy. But the day is still in the future when the fullness of the kingdom of God is manifested and the wicked and rebellious are eliminated and the adversary finally cast off the earth and into the abyss. Then the Lord Himself shall descend and reign forever and ever. Meanwhile, let us be prepared and ready. Let us faithfully do the will of God and be occupied till He comes.

Parables about Prayer

Read: Luke 18:1-43

Memory Work: And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18:1)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *Our loving, heavenly Father will respond to our prayers much more speedily than the unrighteous judge responded to the oppressed widow.*
2. *We must approach God the Father in the sincere attitude of humility when we pray.*
3. *The Lord desires young children to come to know Him and we must do all possible to see that children have this opportunity.*
4. *Whatever hinders us from totally committing our lives to Jesus Christ must be mercilessly cut off.*

I He will avenge them speedily: The parable on prayer is related to the teaching which precedes it in chapter 17. The Lord had been warning about the last days. He compared the end time to the time of Noah and to the time of Lot at Sodom. Here His teaching on prayer is related to being prepared for the coming judgment. We must learn "always to pray" if we are not to be swallowed up in the judgment. The alternative is "pray or faint." That word "faint" means, "to give up."

Jesus' story concerns an independent judge in a certain city. He was his own man, beholden to no one. He feared neither man nor God. A poor widow applied to this judge to be avenged of her adversary. The word "avenged" is to be understood "to have justice done." Women had few rights in those times and the judge was not inclined to accept her case. But she bothered him by her continual coming. Finally, to get rid of her, the unrighteous judge took her case to avenge her of her adversary.

We, too, have an adversary, the devil. Like the widow, we may appeal to the judge

of all the earth to be avenged of our adversary. Unlike the unjust judge, our Lord, will hear our case and avenge us **speedily**. We must discern what is the work of the devil and pray without ceasing to be avenged of him and his foul work. Our Lord will fight for us. He was manifested to destroy the work of the enemy. Let us learn well "always to pray" that we may accomplish the defeat of our adversary, the devil.

II Two men went to pray: This next story was directed to those who trusted in themselves and despised others. The Pharisees were self righteous and they had no use for the publicans and sinners. Jesus told of two men who went to the temple to pray. The first was a Pharisee and the other a publican. When the Pharisee prayed, Jesus said, he prayed **with himself**. It is a knowing commentary on his prayer. He did address God once, but then the rest of the prayer was about himself and his own good works. Five times he used the personal pronoun "I." He gave thanks, but what for? That he was not bad like others! Then he listed his good works: he fasted twice in the week, and gave tithes of all he possessed. He probably was glad to see the publican there for prayer, because it gave him the opportunity to compare himself favorably with such a despised sinner.

The publican, meanwhile, could not so much as lift his eyes toward heaven. He was conscious of his unworthiness and so smote upon his breast and pled for God to be merciful to such a sinner. This is a prayer that God will always hear, so long as it is sincere. The Pharisees prayed, but Jesus said he "prayed thus with himself." His words did not reach God the Father, at least not as an acceptable prayer. The publican's humble plea was heard and accepted.

Jesus revealed that the publican went to his house justified while the Pharisee did not. Humility is an important ingredient in our prayers. The Syro-phoenician mother was humble enough not to mind being called a dog and her prayer was answered. The Roman centurion realized that he was unworthy to entertain Jesus in his home, and his request was granted and his servant healed. Let us learn to pray without ceasing and to pray in true humility. There is no need for us to advise the Lord of our own goodness nor of our worthiness to receive our petitions. He knows our downittings and our uprisings. Let us come humbly to our God and base our plea on His love and mercy. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," Jesus declared. This is an eternal truth and law in the spiritual realm. Let us learn from it to humble ourselves before our God.

III Of such is the kingdom: When the people began to bring their infant children to Jesus for His blessing, the disciples began to chase them away. They, no doubt, thought

that Jesus had more important things to do than to be concerned with little children. But Jesus was angry with the twelve for this attitude and commanded them to allow the children free access to Him, "for of such is the kingdom of God." We have the unspeakable privilege in our Sunday School and Bible Club work to obey Jesus' command to allow the children to come to Him. Researchers have estimated that of all those truly born again in this world, almost 90% came to know and accept the Lord before they were 21 years of age. What a privilege is ours, then, to teach the Gospel to the young ones. Let us make the most of our opportunity and lead the boys and girls to the Savior who receives them so readily.

IV Sell all and follow me: In all three Gospel accounts, the record of Jesus' dealing with the "rich young ruler" follows the story of the bringing of little children to Jesus. It is quite possible that this rich young ruler was one of those who brought children to Jesus for His blessing. At any rate, for a ruler this man had an unusual respect for Jesus. Mark records that he came **kneeling** to Jesus. He called Jesus "good master" and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus referred him to the commandments regarding our personal relationships. The fine young man claimed to have obeyed these since he was a boy. Jesus then told him what he still lacked. The one thing Jesus asked him to do was to sell all that he possessed and to give to the poor and needy and then to come and follow Him. But this was too much for the fine young man whom Jesus loved. He turned and went away very sorrowful.

Jesus took the opportunity to teach about the danger of riches. He explained that a rich man could hardly enter into the kingdom of God. This was a radical departure from the current idea which equated material abundance with blessing of God. We must be careful not to allow material possessions to hinder us in our usefulness in the kingdom of God. Note that the Lord did add that it was not totally impossible for a rich man to be saved, but difficult. Paul also advised that not **many** mighty and not **many** noble of this world find their way into God's kingdom. He, too, left the door open just a crack for he said "not many." He did not say "not any."

The thing that Jesus desired for this fine young man was that he should totally commit his life to following Him. Jesus recognized that the possessions hindered him. That is why Jesus asked him to sell all. Anything which hinders us from fully dedicating ourselves to the service of the Lord must be sacrificed for His sake. Every such sacrifice will give us treasure in heaven. Please do not hold on to anything of this world and thereby lose the kingdom. This fine young man whom Jesus loved lost all that really matters for the sake of earthly possessions which he had to leave eventually anyway. It was an un-

fortunate and foolish choice. Peter was quick to catch the opportunity to remind the Lord that he and the rest of the 12 had indeed left all to follow Him. Jesus assured Peter that anyone who left houses, lands and loved ones for the kingdom of God's sake, would receive abundant reward both in this life and the next.

V Up to Jerusalem: After this Jesus took the twelve aside and in exact detail told them what was about to unfold in Jerusalem. He explained that all that was written in the prophets was to be fulfilled. He told them that He was to be betrayed and delivered to the Gentiles (Romans), and that He would be mocked and spit upon. He foretold that He would be scourged and put to death and on the third day He would rise again. But the disciples could not comprehend what He said.

As they journeyed toward Jerusalem they approached the city of Jericho. There, near the city, a blind beggar inquired about the unusual activity he heard. When he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by he began to cry out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." He recognized Jesus by the official title for the Messiah. The beggar was rebuked and told to keep still but he wisely continued to cry out for mercy. Jesus, of course, heard the cry and commanded the man to be brought to Him. He asked the blind man what his request was and the beggar responded, "that I might receive my sight." At once Jesus spoke the word "receive thy sight" and "thy faith hath saved thee" (verse 42). He was instantly healed and followed Jesus. Didn't the Lord know what this man wanted? Of course He did. But Jesus wanted the man to ask for his specific need. So the Lord desires us to be specific in our requests to Him. Vague generalities will not bring such glory to God when they are answered as very specific articulated requests. Let us learn to always pray and not to faint and let us learn to pray humbly and specifically. God will be glorified by answering such prayer.

Last Entry to Jerusalem

Read: Luke 19:1-48

Memory Work: It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves. (Luke 19:46)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *The Lord is anxious that the lost sinners around us find in Him forgiveness and salvation and a new birth.*
2. *Every one of us has a responsibility to work for the Lord in order to gain some souls for His Kingdom.*
3. *Our Lord is now our King. The final glorious manifestation of His Kingdom is still before us; but He has received the Kingdom from His Father at the ascension and reigns now with all power in heaven and on earth.*
4. *The Lord accepts the praises and worship of His disciples. We can never praise Him enough for His redemption.*
5. *Judgment is sure for all who refuse to have Jesus reign over them.*

I This day is salvation come: After healing the blind beggar, Jesus entered into the city of Jericho. His presence in that city created quite a stir. One of the chief tax collectors was curious to see who this was creating such excitement in the streets. This man, Zacchaeus, was very short of stature. He was unable to see over the heads or shoulders of the crowds lining the streets as Jesus passed that way. The little tax collector was not to be deterred, so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree where Jesus was to pass. When the Master came to the place, He looked up and calling Zacchaeus by name, requested him to come down and provide lodging for Him. Zacchaeus made haste and came down and received Jesus joyfully. The Pharisees murmured because Jesus went to be the guest of one who was a sinner. Luke tells us that this little fellow was rich. That means that he had

taken advantage of his position and extorted more tax money from those in his district than was due to Rome. Such was the general practice of the publicans and that is why they were hated so vehemently.

Wouldn't we like to know what went on inside Zacchaeus' house that day? But the door was closed behind Jesus and how the Lord dealt with the publican we do not know. We can assume that He tactfully and graciously pointed the publican to the everlasting kingdom of heaven enabling him to understand the folly of living for the material things of earth. When the two emerged from their conference, Zacchaeus was ready to renounce his covetousness and to announce his restitution. He determined to give half of his goods to the poor and also to restore what he had extorted by false accusation from the taxpayers, fourfold.

The Lord Jesus announced that salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house that very day. He declared the little publican to be a son of Abraham. The Son of man had come, to Jericho as well as to earth in general, to seek and to save that which was lost (vs. 10).

II Occupy till I come: Still in Jericho, the Lord explained the truth concerning His kingdom, because the people, including the disciples, expected it to be manifested immediately. The Lord wanted them to understand that there was to be a lapse of time before the kingdom would be manifested on earth. The people generally misunderstood the nature of the kingdom. They were looking for a kingdom which would break the yoke of Roman oppression and restore supremacy to the nation of Israel. Unfortunately, there are prominent Christian teachers today who think that a Jewish kingdom will yet be established. There is no warrant in the Scriptures for such an idea. The Kingdom of God is coming to be sure, and Jesus will reign supreme; but His kingdom will not be Jewish in nature.

The illustration Jesus used could be easily understood by all who heard Him. Herod the Great, Archelaus, and Antipas had all done exactly what Jesus described. They had left their territory to go to Rome for the purpose of requesting the position of king. Only Herod the Great succeeded. In the case of Archelaus, Herod's successor, the people sent an ambassador after him to advise Rome that they did not want Archelaus to be their king. He never received his kingdom. Interestingly, this grasping ruler had his palace at Jericho where Jesus told this story.

The illustration reveals a nobleman going into a far country to receive a kingdom and then returning to his place. He calls ten servants and bestows each of them with one pound. This parable differs from that of the talents in Matthew 25 in that here all receive equally one pound while in the other, differing amounts are bestowed according to the

servants' individual abilities. These servants were simply told to "occupy till I come." Meanwhile the inhabitants sent a message after the nobleman, exactly as the Judeans had after Archelaus, saying that they would not have this man to reign over them. In Jesus' story the nobleman did receive his kingdom and the authority to reign over it. When he returned he called for his servants and demanded a report of how they had fared with the pound entrusted to each of them. One had gained ten pounds and he was commended and given charge of ten cities in the new kingdom. Another had gained five pounds and he was commended and rewarded proportionately. One servant, however, had simply wrapped the pound in a napkin and for fear of losing it had done nothing. The king was angry with this fearful and slothful servant and stripped the pound from him and gave it to the servant who had gained ten. Then the king dealt with his enemies who would not have him to reign over them. They were arrested and executed before the king.

The application of this parable is clear. Our Lord has gone on a long journey into the heavens to receive His Kingdom. He has given to all who are truly His servants the "pound" of salvation to which we are to witness till He returns. The believer's most important occupation is his work for the King. The secular trade or calling is secondary. That pays the bills, but the witness for Christ and the prayer of intercession for souls is the commission which demands our first allegiance.

Let every one be warned or assured as the case may be, that the King is coming back again. He is sure to demand an accounting of what we have done with the salvation He has given us. There is certain judgment for those who refuse Him as their Lord; and there is eternal loss for such as wrap their witness in a napkin and are unconcerned for the salvation of the lost. Let us "occupy till He come." Seize every opportunity to witness for the Lord. Redeem the time! The King is coming. Will it be reward or rebuke for you? Let's be faithful and serve Him joyfully.

III Blessed be the King: After this teaching, Jesus went on to Jerusalem. When He came as far as Bethphage and Bethany He sent two disciples to obtain a colt never before ridden. They found the colt just as Jesus had said and brought it to the Master. The significance in entering Jerusalem on the colt of an ass, was that it was the method of regal coronation. The king to be crowned rode upon a donkey. So Jesus rode on the colt of a donkey. It was miraculous that the unbroken colt docilely allowed Jesus to ride. The Lord was certainly not expecting to become the political head of state in Jerusalem. Several times the people had attempted to make Him king and He repudiated that effort. Now He knew that He was going to the cross. But He also knew that He was riding to resurrection and ascension. **There** was the crowning day.

But for now, Jesus accepted the praises of the crowd and of the children. When the Pharisees protested that the praises were inappropriate, Jesus replied that if they held their peace, the stones would cry out.

IV If Thou hadst known: Jesus did not stay in Jerusalem that night. He went instead to Olivet. The next day He went again to Jerusalem and on the way He paused and emotionally wept over the city. He wept because they had never perceived the opportunity they had, and He wept because He foresaw the judgment which was coming within a generation on the city. They had rejected the message and the Man which would have brought them peace with heaven and earth. Jesus specifically foretold that the days would come when the city would be surrounded and cut off. Not one stone would be left upon another and the children within would perish. All came to pass in the siege of Titus in 70 A.D. They missed their opportunity for repentance and preservation. Let us be sure that we do not miss our opportunity for salvation. Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart. Tomorrow may be too late.

V A den of thieves: The second day in Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple and saw the great activity of merchandising going on. He heard the bankers haggling over exchange rates for temple currency. He heard the bargaining for sacrificial animals and the whole scene revolted the Lord. "It is written," He cried out, "My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves" (verse 46). He cast out those who bought and disrupted the great commercial activity of the temple. Let us remember that the house of the Lord is for prayer and worship and for the ministry of the Word. We must repudiate such activity that makes the house of God into a commercial place of business. Not money-changing, but life-changing is the business of the local church. Let prayer be the greatest activity and all else be secondary and let the commerce of the world be conducted elsewhere.

Challenged by the Chief Priests

Read: Luke 20:1-47

Memory Work: And they could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace. (Luke 20:26)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

- 1. When the servants of God minister in the Spirit, the authority of heaven backs up that work.*
- 2. The Lord expects us to bring forth the fruits of righteousness and obedient service since He has graciously redeemed us from the kingdom of darkness.*
- 3. It is glorifying to God when His children are loyal citizens of their country, but their first loyalty is due to their Creator and Redeemer.*
- 4. Those who have died in Christ are not dead. Life after death is assured by the clear teaching of the Lord Himself.*
- 5. The Lord Jesus is both the Son of David and the Son of God. We are safe when we put all of our trust in Him.*
- 6. The Lord seeks sincerity and truth in His disciples. His strongest denunciations were aimed at hypocrisy.*

I By what authority? When Jesus cleansed the temple for the second time, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders of the Jews were furious. The tables of the money changers were their concessions. The High Priest received a percentage of every transaction. These were covetous men. They lived for honor and for money. Forty years later when the Roman army broke into Jerusalem and razed the temple to the ground, they found a huge hoard of money in the temple treasury. The fact that Jesus alone could disrupt the entire commerce of the temple disturbed the Jewish leaders greatly. They sent

a delegation to Jesus to demand from Him, by what authority He did these things. They also demanded to know where that authority came from.

Instead of telling these chief men where His authority came from, Jesus asserted that authority again and demanded of them their judgment concerning the ministry of John the Baptist. He asked if they perceived that ministry to be of heaven or devised by man. The Jews consulted together and recognized that they were in a dilemma. They reasoned that if they said that John's ministry was "of men" the people, who regarded John as an inspired prophet, would stone them. They supposed, on the other hand, that if they admitted that John's ministry was "of heaven" that Jesus would embarrass them by asking why then they did not believe him. Their reasoning was probably faulty because of their guilty consciences. It seems likely that if they had indeed admitted that John's ministry was of heaven that Jesus would have answered their original question by quoting the testimony of John concerning Himself. When the Jewish leaders refused to answer Jesus' question, He likewise refused to answer theirs.

The question of authority bothered the leaders of the Jews. They sensed that Jesus had an authority which they lacked. His teaching was so definite. His ministry revealed authority over disease, demons, and death. They felt their authority to rule slipping. They felt threatened by Jesus. Therefore, in desperation they determined that He should die to preserve their authority. Today, the Lord will back up His Spirit-led ministers with the authority of heaven. It is our duty to be so filled with the Spirit that such authority overcomes all the works of darkness about us.

II The Lord expects fruit: These things took place on the third day of that fateful last week in Jerusalem. Jesus was not deliberately antagonizing the Jewish leaders, but attempting one more time to awaken them to truth and righteousness. He had been teaching the people and preaching the gospel to them when the chief priests had interrupted Him with their demands concerning His authority. Now Jesus spoke to the people again while the Jewish leaders listened also. He told the story of a vineyard that was rented to some husbandmen while the owner took a journey into a far country. The Jewish people were well aware that the vine was the symbol of their nation. David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea all used the symbol of the vineyard to represent the nation of Israel. All who heard this parable perceived that Jesus was speaking of the Jewish nation. Jesus continued the story, explaining that at the time of the harvest the owner sent his servant to the husbandmen to receive the portion of the fruit which was due to him as rental payment. The husbandmen wickedly beat the owner's servant and sent him away empty. Other servants were sent and mistreated also until the owner sent his beloved son suppos-

ing that the husbandmen would reverence him for sure. They conspired, however, to kill the son and seize the property for themselves. The Lord asked what the lord of that vineyard would do to those wicked servants. In Luke's narrative Jesus answers His own question while in Matthew the Jewish leaders answered, "He shall come and destroy these husbandmen and shall give the vineyard to others." They understood the story perfectly and said, "God forbid."

Finally, the Lord quoted the well-known last words from the great Hallel. This was the hymn which was sung at all the Jewish feasts and consisted of Psalms 113-118. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner," Jesus quoted. Then He warned them again that if they would not fall upon this stone (in true repentance) that it would fall upon them (in judgment) and grind them to powder.

III A clever trap: The delegation of Jewish leaders became more angry than ever. They did not repent and instead conspired to entrap Him. Only fear of the common people who listened to the Lord so eagerly, prevented the arrogant leaders from physically harming the Lord. They determined to cleverly entrap Him. Flattering scoundrels presented the Lord with the question as to whether God's people should give tribute money to a pagan government. They, no doubt, reasoned that whatever answer He gave, He would be the loser. If He said that they should pay tribute it would offend the people and discredit any claims as to His Messiahship. On the other hand, if He declared that God's chosen people should not pay tribute to the heathen government they would at once report Him to the Roman authority and accuse Him of sedition. But not only was the authority of heaven behind the work of the Lord, but the wisdom of the Spirit of God was His portion also. Jesus called for a coin. He asked whose image and writing appeared on the coin. When they answered that it was Caesar's, He majestically declared, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and to God the things which be God's." They were dumbfounded. They could not accuse Him nor find fault with that answer and left defeated for the moment.

There is an important eternal truth in this wise response of Jesus. The believer does owe something to the state. We are clearly taught to pay our taxes to the government under which we live. We are also instructed to pray diligently for all in authority and to obey the laws of the land for the Lord's sake. Only when those laws conflict with the laws of the kingdom of God are we permitted to disobey or ignore the laws of the state. While our money bears an inscription and image of our earthly government, our bodies bear the image of our heavenly government. We are first citizens of heaven, and then of our country. Our bodies belong, not to the state but to our God, who created them in His own

image and then redeemed them by the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

IV The God of the living: Next the Sadducees attempted to discredit the teaching of Jesus by ridiculing the doctrine of life after death. Ridicule is powerful weapon. When used without truth it is a fiery dart of the wicked one. These Sadducees told the ridiculous story of a poor woman whose husband died before a child was born to them. Then in obedience to the law, the dead man's brother took her as his wife to raise up an heir in his brother's name. Alas, he died also, whereupon the third brother took her and died. Finally, seven brothers all had her as a wife before she died also. The great question of these skeptics was, "whose wife will she be in the resurrection?" Jesus defeated their ridicule with truth. First He explained that life hereafter is not carnal. Marriage relationships are superceded by a higher and holier society. Then, the Lord used a favorite and highly esteemed scripture from the law to prove life after death. He quoted the words of God to Moses from the burning bush at the Mount of God. There God spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). Jesus reasoned with the Sadducees then, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been long dead and buried when God spoke these words to Moses. Since God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had to be alive and in God's keeping when He so spake to Moses. So the arrogant ridicule of the Sadducees turned to shame before the superior reasoning of the Lord.

The Lord tried once more to awaken these misguided leaders to the truth of His claims of Messiahship. He asked them why, if the Messiah was the son of David, he addressed Him as Lord in Psalm 110:1. They should have understood that such could only be the case if the Messiah was the son of David on the natural side and the Son of God on the spiritual side. Finally, Jesus exposed the scribes as they really were, anxious to be honored and esteemed by the public, but in actuality dishonest, covetous hypocrites. The denunciation should have awakened some to their need, but alas they only covered their wicked acts by long and insincere prayers. May God help us to be very true and very sincere and free from the hateful sin of hypocrisy.

Destruction of Jerusalem Foretold

Read: Luke 21:1-38

Memory Work: 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)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *The Lord considers how we give our gifts and offerings, more than what we give.*
2. *As surely as the great stones of the temple at Jerusalem were thrown down, so the works of men in this world will be destroyed.*
3. *We must not allow ourselves to be so involved with things of this life, that we lose the perspective of eternity!*
4. *We are warned to be watchful and prayerful that we may, in the end, stand before the Son of man.*

More than they all: After silencing all the attacks of the Sadducees and chief priests and scribes, Jesus watched as some rich men cast their gifts and offerings into the temple treasury. He saw and noted also, how a certain widow cast in two mites. The Lord pointed out to those about Him that this poor widow had cast in more than all the rich men. They had given gifts and offerings from their surplus of money, while she had given all she had to live on. The scene took place in the court of the women in Herod's temple. It was there that thirteen chests, called "shopharoth," were set up to receive the offerings of the people. Jesus watched, Mark tells us, how the people gave. He saw the amount also, but was more interested in the motives. The rich men came, perhaps sounding a trumpet, figuratively, before them and gave their offerings for the praise and esteem of men. The widow from her deep poverty cast in all the living she had. Her two mites would not go far in the maintenance of the temple, but it went, oh, so far in bringing the commendation of the Lord. Her two mites could not have purchased for the widow more than provision for one

meagre meal, but the Lord saw that it was all the living she had.

Now the Lord has never demanded that we sell all our possessions as a general rule and give everything to His work. Let us remember, however, that the Lord does see and note how we give. If we give only from our surplus, it is not as acceptable as an offering of real sacrifice. Upon occasion, the Lord may lead us to give a real sacrificial offering for His work. Such sacrifices are eternally rewarding and are truly a good investment. When we give sacrificially to the Lord, He pours back abundantly to us both now and hereafter. We cannot outgive God.

II Not one stone upon another: For some reason, the disciples pointed out to Jesus, the great and beautiful stones of Herod's temple. Herod the Great took great pride in his building projects. The Jews told Jesus on one occasion (John 2:20) that it had taken 46 years to build the temple and it still was not finished. Herod had the eastern face of the building covered with golden plates which radiantly reflected the morning sun. It was truly a remarkable building. But when the disciples pointed out the remarkable characteristics of the building to Jesus, He astonished them by declaring that not one stone would be left standing on another. The temple would be leveled to the ground. This was a clear prediction of what was to come. The Lord's prediction was fulfilled in every detail. The year A.D. 70 saw the army of Titus finally break through the wall of Jerusalem after a siege of two years. The Roman soldiers, greedy for gold, literally cast down every stone of the temple in their search for the precious metal.

The astonished disciples asked when these things would take place and what sign they could look for to signal this remarkable judgment. Jesus answered both of these questions and indeed said a good deal more. As to when these things should occur, Jesus specifically said that "this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (verse 32). Concerning the sign of the imminent fulfillment of the prophecy Jesus explained, "When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" (verse 20). The parallel passage in Matthew 24 also contains the disciples' question regarding the end of the world. The Lord was primarily concerned here with preparing His disciples for what was before them. He carefully explained that the judgment of Jerusalem would not occur for some time. They would have the opportunity to faithfully serve their Lord and to endure persecutions for His name's sake. He warned them that false Messiahs would appear and advised the disciples not to be deceived by such. He told them that there would be political upheavals and disturbances and natural disasters. He assured them that they need not be terrified by these things. He forewarned them also that they would be persecuted and imprisoned and brought before great judges and kings of the

earth. This would give them opportunity to testify of Christ to the whole world. Jesus promised to give His persecuted witnesses the wisdom to defend themselves and proclaim the Gospel in a way which could not be gainsaid. Some of them would indeed be put to a martyr's death, but Jesus promised that not a hair of their heads should perish! They might die for His sake but never perish. God does not see as we see. Eternity is real. Though we lay down our lives for Him we cannot perish!

Concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish nation in their unique relationship to God, Jesus carefully warned that when the Roman armies appeared around Jerusalem, this was to be taken as a sign that the end was imminent. The followers of the Lord were commanded to flee without delay. No time was to be taken to pack or to sell property. The reason for the haste was that such tribulation and suffering was to come upon the inhabitants of the city where the son of God was rejected and crucified, that nothing in history past or future could ever compare with it. The teaching regarding the great tribulation is often transposed from its real setting by modern Christian teachers into the future preceeding the second coming of Christ and following a "secret rapture." Such an interpretation does violence to the text. That is not to say that there is not to be persecution and tribulation for God's people in these days, but clearly there can be only one event to fulfill the prophecy "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Clearly, the great tribulation had to do with the destruction of Jerusalem and not with the second coming of the Lord. Jesus explained that this event was judgment upon Israel: "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." The Jews which did not perish in the great destruction of Jerusalem would "be led away captive into all nations" (Luke 21:24). Early church history records that indeed the followers of Jesus observed the sign of the approaching armies of Rome. They also were warned through the messages inspired by the Holy Spirit and fled Jerusalem just before the city was shut up and surrounded. Josephus records that nearly one million people were trapped in the city. Many visitors were caught there because of the celebration of a feast. In the two years of the siege and in the final battle nine hundred thousand perished and the rest were taken captive and sold for slaves throughout the empire. During the two-year siege the great tribulation truly took place. The suffering is unequalled in all recorded history. Josephus, who witnessed some of it before defecting to the Romans, describes the horrors of starvation, pestilence, sedition and cannibalism within the city. Truly all came to pass as Jesus said, before that generation passed away.

III The Son of Man coming in power: Concerning the end of the world, Jesus had

a different message. He taught there would be continual wars and upheavals in the world. That there would always be distress and perplexity. Men's hearts would always be failing for fear. He warned that at the time of His second coming and the judgment and overthrow of this world system there would be no special sign to signal the end. He taught His followers to be always ready for neither they nor even the angels of heaven knew the time of the end. It is a mistake to interpret world events and catastrophies as signs of Jesus' imminent return. It is, however, no mistake to expect the Lord's return momentarily. We must be always ready. The best way to be prepared is to be inwardly pure. We are offered the grace of God to overcome temptation and the evil nature of our "old man" and so be ready for the coming of our Lord. The second part of our readiness is to be occupied, doing the will of God. We are His witnesses here. When He comes may He find us holy and pure and busy obeying His will for us.

We are warned not to get entangled with the business of this world or with its pleasures, for without warning, just like the destruction of Sodom, and without sign, just like the flood, "as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:35). What are we to do? Take heed---Watch---Pray!

Thus Jesus warned His disciples before He died on the cross. He went at night to the mount of Olives where He enlarged upon what is recorded here in Luke (see Matt. 24 & 25). But in the morning He returned to the temple and taught the people again and the people came early to listen.

The Last Supper

Read: Luke 22:1-71

Memory Work: 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 22:19)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *The last supper was the passover observance; after that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper which superceded the Passover.*
2. *The carnal nature desires to be served, while the Christian nature follows the example of Jesus and delights to serve.*
3. *We have a High Priest in heaven who is able to save us to the uttermost because He intercedes at the right hand of the Father.*
4. *We must yield our will up to the Lord, as Jesus did, and pray, "Not my will, but thine be done."*
5. *Let us be careful not to boast of our zeal or strength. Without God's daily grace we would miserably fail.*
6. *The question is settled forever, Jesus is both Messiah and Son of God; or He was the greatest fraud and deceiver who ever lived.*

I Prepare us the passover: Each day of that fateful last week Jesus taught in the temple and then spent the night on the mount of Olives. The events recorded in chapter 22 of Luke took place on the day before the crucifixion. The passover was to be celebrated that evening after the sun had set. Jesus desired to keep this feast with His disciples before He went to the cross. The passover was a family feast. Each family gathered together and the father of the household presided. Some time before, when Jesus' mother and brothers had attempted to stop His ministry and bring Him home, He had declared that His mother

and His brethren were such as heard the word of God and obeyed it. Now Jesus chose to preside over the passover with His disciples. They were His family.

Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare for the feast. He told them by the miraculous word of knowledge that they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Such a thing would be unusual for the carrying of water was usually done by women. They were to follow him to the house where he served and there ask the owner for the use of the guest chamber where Jesus assured the two disciples that they would be shown a large furnished upper room where they could make the necessary preparations. Peter and John found everything exactly as Jesus had told them and they made the necessary preparations.

While the disciples prepared for the passover feast, the scribes and the chief priests prepared for something else: something sinister. They sought ways and means to kill Jesus. The great hindrance was the people who were still in sympathy with Jesus. The evil leaders were afraid of the people. Hell was preparing also for the death of the Son of God. Satan entered into Judas and put it in his heart to betray Jesus. Persistent covetousness and dishonesty opened the door of Judas' soul to the devil and the evil one possessed the betrayer and used him to further his nefarious scheme to destroy Jesus. Judas went to the chief priests and covenanted with them to betray Jesus and deliver Him to them in the absence of the people whom the priests feared, for thirty pieces of silver. So the arena was readied for the greatest battle in the history of humanity.

II The last supper and the first: The twelve disciples all came to the passover supper. Jesus told them that He had a great desire to have this supper with them. This was the hour for which He had come into the world. This passover was to be the last. The type of the passover lamb was now to become a reality. Christ the true passover lamb was now to be sacrificed for humanity.

After the passover cup was drunk by the disciples, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. This sacrament was to be observed by His followers until He returns. The Lord's supper had as its two elements the bread as a type of the body of our Lord, which was broken at the cross for us that we might be whole; and the cup, the juice of the fruit of the vine and a type of the blood of Christ shed for us at Calvary. We are commanded to observe this sacrament until our Lord's return. How presumptuous it is for believers to neglect this holy sacrament. Those who do so risk losing their place in the true body of Christ.

Judas probably was excluded from the Lord's Supper. He was present for the Passover and was given the sop. It seems most probable that Jesus sent him out before instituting the new sacrament. When Jesus said, "the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table," it evoked a heated discussion among the disciples. Soon their discussion

turned to the continuing dispute amongst them as to which of them should be the greatest in the kingdom. Their arguing was deplorable, of course, but it showed that they still were confident, however ignorantly, that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God. But Jesus took the opportunity to teach them of the honor of serving in His kingdom. In the world the greater are served by the lesser, but in the kingdom of God he who serves most is the greatest. Jesus called to their attention that He went among them as a servant. The story in John is accompanied by the incident of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Truly Jesus was a great example of serving. The Lord finally assured the eleven that since they had continued with Him in all His trials and tests, that He would appoint them places in His kingdom and that they would eat and drink at His table in the eternal kingdom. They would have the responsibility of judging the twelve tribes of Israel. What a turnabout for the scribes and Pharisees that will be. These followers of Jesus whom they despised and rejected will judge them in that day of accountability.

III Not my will but Thine: Following the supper, and the marvelous teachings recorded in John 14-16, Jesus went out of the city again. He stopped at the garden of Gethsemane for a time of prayer. It was a place Jesus often resorted to with His disciples. Judas was very familiar with the place and there it was that he determined to deliver Jesus into the hands of the conspiring chief priests. When Jesus came to the garden he took Peter, James, and John with Him to His place of prayer and asked them to pray with Him in that hour. They promptly fell asleep while Jesus, some distance further on, agonized in prayer. His perspiration became great drops of blood. He pled with the Father that if it were possible to remove the cup from Him. But He concluded with the prayer of resignation "nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Exactly what Jesus meant by His prayer is open to discussion. Was He really praying to be spared from the death He knew very well He had come into this world to accomplish? The reference to "this cup" seems to indicate that. The other possibility is that as the sin and sickness of the world came upon Him there in the garden, Satan attempted to spoil God's plan by killing Jesus before He ever reached the cross. Though we cannot positively solve this question, we do know that Jesus' prayer was answered by the appearance of an angel ministering to Him and strengthening Him for what was before Him. We always do well when we pray for God's will to be done. "Lord make us to know Thy will; and help us to do Thy will; and cause us to love Thy will."

After the angel had ministered to Jesus He went to the disciples and found them asleep. He rebuked them for their careless indolence and while He spake the crowd with Judas appeared. The traitorous disciple came and kissed Jesus. The eleven were ready to fight and indeed Peter wildly slashed his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the High

Priest. The Lord told them to put up their swords and healed the wounded ear. The Lord asked why they came with such a band of armed men when He had openly taught in the temple every day. But He meekly submitted to their indignities, recognizing that this was "their hour" and "the power of darkness." So they took Him to the house of the High Priest.

IV I have prayed for thee: The story of how the Lord brought Peter through this terrible time is one of the greatest in all of scripture. First of all, the Lord warned Peter that Satan desired to have him to sift him like wheat. But Jesus assured Peter that He had prayed for him and that when the trial was over he should strengthen the other disciples. Peter, confidently assured the Lord that there was nothing to worry about. He was ready and willing to die for Him. But the Lord warned Peter again that before the cock would crow to announce the dawn he would have denied that he even knew the Lord three times. The Lord warned Peter before they went to Gethsemane. When Jesus was taken captive he followed Jesus "afar off." It was too bad that it was "afar off," but at least he did follow. Only he and John did so. When Jesus was before the Sanhedrin Peter warmed himself at a fire in the hall and sat down among the people. A maid recognized Peter and announced that He was one of Jesus' followers, but Peter denied knowing Him. A second time Peter was recognized and he denied knowing Jesus. An hour later another confidently affirmed that Peter was one of Jesus' disciples. As he denied knowing Jesus, this time with a vulgar oath, the rooster crowed and Jesus turned and looked at Peter, catching his eye for a moment. At once Peter went out and wept bitterly. Let us give Peter some credit here. He at least was looking at Jesus when the Lord turned and looked at him. That look of Jesus was not reproachful, but full of compassion and love. That is why Peter went out and wept so bitterly.

V Art Thou the Christ, the Son of God?: Two questions the Sanhedrin demanded Jesus to answer under oath as it were. The first was, "Art thou the Messiah?" Jesus responded that if He told them so, they would not believe Him anyway. He told them that hereafter they would see the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. His answer was, "Ye say (the truth) that I am." This brought forth the violent reaction from the Sanhedrin. The High Priest rent his garment and together they decided that they needed no further witnesses. He was guilty of blasphemy. Our Lord clearly is the Messiah and the Son of God as He said or else He is the perpetrator of the cruelest deception ever conceived. Later He was taken to the palace of Caiaphas. He was a second High Priest appointed by the Romans. It was at the palace of Caiaphas where Peter denied the Lord.

The Victory of the Cross

Read: Luke 23:1-56

Memory Work: And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. (Luke 23:46)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *Jealousy and prejudice blind us to our own faults and imagine and exaggerate the faults of others.*
2. *True courage is to do the right even though costly or unpopular.*
3. *We must seek from the Lord that unparalleled spirit of forgiveness which caused Jesus to ask forgiveness for those who nailed Him to the cross*
4. *One of the criminals was snatched from damnation by the dying Saviour.*
5. *When Satan and His instruments, both Jews and Gentiles, had done their worst, Jesus could shout in triumph, "It is finished," and the way into God's presence was opened forever to humanity!*

I Before Pilate: Luke condenses the story of the trial of Jesus, but the important facts are all there. Before the Jewish Sanhedrin, Jesus was accused of blasphemy because He said that He was the Son of God. That elite body of priests and elders condemned Jesus without a dissenting voice. But the Jews did not have the authority to pass the death sentence. Therefore, they determined to bring Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor to have Him sentenced to execution by crucifixion. When the whole Sanhedrin brought Jesus to Pilate early in the morning they introduced new charges against Jesus. For blasphemy Pilate would have not even listened to their case. So now they conspired to change their charges to sedition and treason. They told Pilate that investigation had revealed that "this fellow" had forbidden the Jews to pay tribute to Rome, and had proclaimed Himself to be a king. Luke omits the private interview that Pilate had with Jesus

and simply tells us the result. The governor, quite aware that the Jews had brought Jesus to him because of their envy, announced that he found Jesus "not guilty." "I find no fault in this man," he proclaimed. But the Jews became fierce and accused Jesus of many things and caused Pilate to weaken in his decision. When Pilate heard that Jesus had begun in Galilee, he asked if Jesus was a Galilaean. He then sent Jesus to be judged by Herod whose jurisdiction was in Galilee and who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. Thus Pilate hoped to be rid of the whole affair.

II Before Herod: Herod was delighted when he learned that Pilate had sent Jesus to be judged in his court. He and the Judean governor had been at odds but this day they were reconciled and made friends. Herod had heard a lot about Jesus and wanted to see some miracle done by Him. This is the same man who once listened attentively to John the Baptist and responded to his preaching in many things. It was he who had, at his adultrous wife's insistence, shut John up in prison. His aroused passion after ogling at the obscene dance of Herodias' daughter inflamed him to make a wild promise to her. This resulted in the beheading of John. Conscience caused Herod to imagine that Jesus was John come back to life to haunt him. Now this leader who was once near to the kingdom had degenerated into a sin-hardened cynic. He was only interested in the thrill of seeing a miracle. Herod paid little, if any attention to the vehement accusations of the Jews. He questioned Jesus with many words, but Jesus disdained to answer him a single word. Once Jesus had called Herod, "that fox," but now He spoke nothing, totally ignoring him. Finally Herod with his men of war tormented Jesus by making fun of Him. Herod treated Jesus as if He were a buffoon or a clown and then sent Him back to Pilate.

III Pilate yields to pressure: Pilate had already judged Jesus to be "not guilty." Herod had not sentenced Jesus either and Pilate took that to mean that he found nothing worthy of death in Jesus. He should have simply released Jesus at this point. It was the only legal thing to do. Yet, for fear of an uproar that might cost him his job, he attempted to appease the Jews by sentencing Jesus to be scourged. This was absolutely illegal. Even this did not satisfy the Jews. Every passover the Romans released one prisoner of the Jews as a goodwill gesture. The Jews chose the one to be released. But now Pilate limited them to choose Jesus or Barabbas. This man was really guilty of sedition and revolution and in the insurrection he led he had committed murder. Nevertheless, the Jews chose Barabbas to the confusion of Pilate. Once more he tried to release Jesus after scourging but the crowd screamed for His crucifixion. Another evangelist tells of Pilate's wife warning him to have nothing to do with "that just man" for she had been warned in a dream concerning Jesus.

Poor Pilate, the weak governor had his conscience telling him to do right. He heard the voice of his wife warning him, but in the end the voice of the chief priests prevailed. To keep the peace and his job, Pilate yielded to their pressure. He attempted to wash his hands of the affair, but all the soap and water in the world could not wash the guilt away. So he delivered Jesus to be crucified and released the real criminal Barabbas.

IV The way of the cross: The suffering of Jesus was intense. It was spiritual as well as physical. It began in the garden of Gethsemane when He became sorrowful unto death. His perspiration became blood. His disciples slept and then Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. He was taken to the house of Annas, the Jewish high priest and interrogated and mocked and smitten. Then He was taken before the Sanhedrin at the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest appointed by the Romans. Again, He was interrogated and abused. At dawn He was dragged before Pilate. Then to Herod, where He was mocked and cruelly treated and returned to Pilate. The soldiers of Pilate also abused the Lord and placed the crown of thorns about His head. Finally, Pilate delivered Him up to the Jews to be crucified. The sin and the sickness of the whole world fell upon Him. At last He was given the cross to carry to Golgotha, Calvary, the place of a skull. And all this happened before noon of that climactic day. As Jesus went forth bearing the cross some women of Jerusalem wept for Him. He paused and advised them not to weep for Him but for themselves and those who would suffer in the judgment of Jerusalem soon to come. At the gate of the city they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross for Jesus. The Lord must have weakened from the unbelievable suffering. Simon, no doubt, became a disciple for we know that his two sons Rufus and Alexander became believers and were known to Mark (Mark 15:21). Two criminals were executed with Jesus, one on His left and one on His right.

V At Calvary: Never had the executioners such a victim. Jesus prayed for them as they nailed Him to the cross. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," He prayed. May that forgiving spirit be our portion, that there never may be found in us an unwillingness to forgive.

The soldiers divided His clothing between them and cast lots for His cloak in unwitting fulfillment of the Psalmists' prophecy. The chief rulers mocked Him and joked that though he "saved" others, He could not save Himself. The soldiers offered Him bitter vinegar to drink. His charge was written on a sign in three languages: Greek, Latin and Hebrew. It read: "**THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**" Yes, He was the King of the Jews but not of the Jews only but of the Gentiles as well, and of Heaven. Indeed this was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords despite all evidence to the contrary.

For a while the two thieves taunted Him also, but finally one rebuked the other and acknowledging and repenting of his sin proclaimed his trust in Jesus by requesting a place in His Kingdom. So a triumph at the gates of death and one was snatched from the jaws of hell. "Today," Jesus promised, "thou shalt be with me in paradise." And many a dying sinner has found comfort in the salvation of that thief and has been inspired to call on the Lord for mercy. And many have indeed found their way at last into that Kingdom which is not of this world.

From the sixth hour to the ninth hour, there was darkness over the land. There was also an earthquake as if the sun and earth could not bare the events before and on them. At last Jesus cried with a loud voice and then committed His spirit to God and expired. Luke does not tell us what He cried with that loud voice, but John records the words, "IT IS FINISHED." That is what He shouted. Those words were not the last gasp of a dying victim, but the triumphant shout of a victorious conqueror. The vail in the temple was rent from top to bottom. The centurion in charge of the execution was so moved that he concluded that Jesus was surely a righteous man. Matthew records that the centurion concluded that this was the "Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). Those who beheld these things left the scene smiting upon their breasts, an expression of anguish. The believing women and friends from Galilee watched from a distance.

VI A borrowed grave: A secret believer and one of the counselors of the Jews became bold at last and requested permission to care for the body of Jesus. He took Jesus from the cross and wrapped the body in linen and laid it in the tomb he had hewn from solid rock in his nearby garden. The women of Galilee saw where the body was laid and went to prepare spices. They were hindered from applying the spices to the body of Jesus by the sabbath day. They dutifully rested on the sabbath day. They brought them early on the first day of the week. And what a day that was to be! (Continued next week)

Risen Indeed

Read: Luke 24

Memory Work: And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. (Luke 24:46)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *The resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first day of the week form the basis for keeping Sunday as the Lord's day rather than the Old Testament seventh day sabbath.*
2. *We need the illumination of the Holy Spirit to really hear and understand the truths of God.*
3. *The Lord's special appearance to Peter sealed his restoration.*
4. *In the glorious and mysterious matter of Jesus' resurrection body we have the suggestion, at least, of what may happen to the prepared believers when the trumpet shall sound and they are changed and caught up to this spiritual body experience.*

I In the morning: The loving women were delayed in bringing their spices to the body of Jesus by the sabbath day. Their love for Jesus moved them to prepare the spices and bring them as soon as it was possible. So, very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they met and proceeded to the tomb. They had not considered the difficulties of the stone and the Roman seal which could not be broken and the soldiers guarding the sepulchre. When they drew near they discovered the stone rolled away from the sepulchre and no soldiers anywhere to be found. They went immediately into the tomb and discovered that the body of the Lord was missing. They were perplexed and then thoroughly frightened by the sudden appearance of two angels in shining garments. The women bowed their faces to the ground and heard the angels gently reprove them for seeking the living among the dead. "He is not here, but is risen," they declared; and then

the angels reminded them of what Jesus had told them in Galilee: "The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (verse 7). Then the women remembered. How often, the Lord had mentioned the rising on the third and yet not one of the disciples or women grasped the truth of this word. None of them were expecting resurrection that third day. We need to ask the Lord to open our ears and our understanding so that we hear and grasp the word of the Lord.

Luke greatly condenses the events of that Easter morning and so omits the appearance to Mary. He tells, however, how the women ran to tell what they had experienced at the sepulchre to the eleven disciples and to other believers. The apostles could not believe what the women suggested: that Jesus was risen and alive. Their story seemed an idle tale to them, despite the many times Jesus had mentioned to them the resurrection. They, like Martha, the sister of Lazarus, thought of resurrection only in the context of the end of the age. It was too good to be true. Peter and John at least ran to the tomb to investigate. They found the grave clothes still wrapped, but around nothing and the linen napkin which had covered the face of Jesus in a place by itself. John tells us in his account that this evidence convinced him of the resurrection. Luke reveals that Peter departed, wondering about what had come to pass.

The fact that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, taken in conjunction with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, which was also on the first day of the week, form the basis for the observance of that day, rather than the seventh day as the one set aside for worship and rest by the followers of Jesus.

II In the afternoon: Later that day two followers of Jesus went to the village of Emmaus. One was named Cleopas and the other unnamed. Cleopas, though not mentioned again in the scripture, takes an important place in the history of the early church. As the two friends walked the seven miles to Emmaus they talked of the sad events of the last few days. While they walked and talked, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. He was able to change His appearance so that the two did not recognize Him. He asked what it was that caused their obvious sadness. Cleopas asked with astonishment if He was not aware of what had transpired over the Passover. The "stranger" asked, "what things?" Then they told Him of "Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." They explained how the chief priests and rulers of the Jews had condemned Him and had Him crucified. They confided in the stranger that they had hoped that this Jesus of Nazareth was the One who would redeem Israel. They put this in the past tense: "hoped." They also told the stranger of the excited women who had found the empty tomb and had seen a vision of angels, and of the disciples who had gone

to the tomb and found it even as the women had said.

Finally, the stranger spoke to the two disciples. He first of all reproved them for their reticence to believe. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" he asked. Then He began with Moses and went through all the prophets expounding the prophecies concerning Himself. What a Sunday afternoon Bible Class that was! We are not told what exactly He taught here, nor later that day when He opened the understanding of the others also and enabled them to understand the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms. But surely we have some of the important teachings echoed in the sermons of Peter on the day of Pentecost and in the temple after the healing of the lame man at the gate beautiful of the temple.

When the three drew near to Emmaus, the stranger made as though He was going further, but the two urged Him to lodge with them and He consented. As He sat at meat with them He took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. Instantly their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus. The moment they recognized Him He vanished from their sight. Now they wondered at their own stupidity. "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and he opened to us the scriptures?" they reasoned.

III In the evening: Perhaps they partook of the bread, but if so it was a hasty meal, for although they had obviously intended to stay overnight at Emmaus, they rose up the same hour and returned the seven miles to Jerusalem to tell the eleven of their experience. Before they could tell the glad story the eleven greeted them with the word; "the Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon." What a meeting that must have been. Surely tears and joy were mingled at that reunion! The two finally told how the Lord had walked with them and opened the scriptures to them and how at last they recognized Him as He broke and blessed the bread.

As they told their story, suddenly, despite locked doors, Jesus Himself appeared in their midst. All were terrified. They thought He appeared as a spirit because of His sudden materialization behind the locked doors. Jesus reassured them and showed them the nail scars in His hands and feet. He also allowed them to touch Him so that they would realize that He had flesh and bones. Then He asked for food and He ate broiled fish and honey before them. They were filled with joy and wonder. Then Jesus conducted that first Easter Sunday night meeting. He opened the scriptures to them and explained that it was only by His suffering and death and resurrection that repentance and remission of sins could be preached to **all nations** beginning at Jerusalem. He commissioned them to be His witnesses, but also told them to tarry in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, the power

from on high.

Luke omits many of the other appearances and infallible proofs of His resurrection. During the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension into heaven, Jesus often appeared and then vanished. Yet He had a substantial body which the disciples could touch and feel. His body was real and it had a definite connection with His former body. The scars were there in the new body and the pre-burial body was gone. Is there in these strangely wonderful facts a hint of what will occur when the bodies of our humiliation shall be changed and fashioned like unto His glorified body? Remember what is so often said regarding the Lord's second coming: "We shall be changed." Could it be that this change is what is referred to when Paul declared that those alive and remaining shall be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air?" Think what a work could be accomplished by an army of Holy Spirit filled witnesses with glorified bodies like our Lord's. What a harvest could be reaped in all the world! Lord, make us ready and haste the day. Even so come Lord Jesus!

IV He blessed them: Luke skips over the events of the forty days and closes His gospel with the departure of Jesus from this world. He led the disciples out of Jerusalem as far as Bethany and lifted His nail scarred hands in a benediction blessing and vanished once again from their sight. This time He was taken up from the earth to the glory of heaven. The events of this day are recorded from the heavenly viewpoint in the fourth and fifth chapters of Revelation where Jesus is received into heaven at His ascension and is seated on the throne at the right hand of the Father.

The disciples returned to Jerusalem and were filled with great joy and indeed were continually in the temple praising and worshipping God until the day of Pentecost was fully come.

The Ascension

Read: Acts 1:1-26

Memory Work: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. *Although the physical person of Jesus is taken up from us, He continues to work and teach by His Spirit in His vessels to this day.*
2. *The reality of Jesus' physical resurrection was totally established by "many infallible proofs."*
3. *The promise of the Father, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, was preferable to the bodily presence of Jesus in the earth.*
4. *The baptism of the Holy Spirit brings power from on High, both to overcome temptation and to witness effectively for the Lord.*
5. *The vessels of the Lord are to be led by the Holy Spirit. The nervous energy of the flesh accomplishes little, but the work of the Spirit bears lasting fruit.*

I Of all that Jesus began: We are continuing our New Testament study, following the writings of Luke. He wrote the Gospel which bears his name, and the book that is named, The Acts of the Apostles. He may have been the translator of the book of Hebrews, translating it from its original Aramaic into Greek. Luke addressed the Gospel narrative to one named Theophilus. The Gospel of Luke is the inspired record of the work and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Luke addresses the book of Acts to Theophilus also. He mentions the former Gospel record and explains that it was the account of what Jesus **began** to do and teach. The implication is clear: that the second book is the account of those things which Jesus **continued** to do and to teach through His vessels after He was

taken up physically from them and then returned to them in the person of the Holy Spirit.

The title, "The Acts of the Apostles," is misleading and unfortunate. It implies that the book is a record of all the acts of all the Apostles. The original Greek title is a little better: it is, Acts of Apostles. That suggests that the book is the record of some of the acts of some of the apostles, and that of course, is nearer to the truth. But the book should really be entitled, "The Continuing Work and Teaching of Jesus Through His Disciples By the Enablement of the Holy Spirit." The Lord Jesus is still, to this day, working and teaching in this world through vessels filled with His Holy Spirit and yielded to Him. It is significant that this book of "Acts" does not have a conclusion. It is left sort of hanging. That is surely significant for the Acts of the Lord through His followers in the power of the Spirit have never ceased.

II Forty days: Jesus appeared and disappeared many times during the space of 40 days after His resurrection. He showed Himself at least four times on the first Easter Sunday, appearing to Mary Magdalene and to the two on the road to Emmaus, then to Peter and finally to the disciples behind closed doors. He appeared somewhere along the line to His brother James. On one occasion He appeared to a crowd of over 500. In Galilee the disciples met Him again after fishing all night. For 40 days Jesus showed Himself and proved the reality of His resurrection by many infallible proofs. During those forty days He taught His disciples many things. He opened their understanding and explained the Old Testament scriptures about Himself. From the law of Moses and from the Psalms and from the Prophets, Jesus taught them. He also gave His disciples the great commission to go into all the world to preach the Gospel. He promised to be with them forever, even unto the end of the age and to confirm their teaching by signs and wonders of healings and deliverances and by gifts of the Holy Spirit. He warned them not to begin their mission until they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit from above.

The twelve asked the Lord if at last the time had come for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. They had regained their confidence in the kingship of our Lord, but still misunderstood the nature of His kingdom. The two on the road to Emmaus had revealed that they had hoped (past tense) that it was Jesus which should have redeemed Israel. Now that hope was renewed. Many evangelical leaders today are making the same mistake; looking for the kingdom of God in a political and material way.

III Power to be witnesses: Jesus told His disciples that they should not concern themselves with the times and seasons which were in the hands of the Father. In answer to their question, however, He directed their attention to the power from above which

would come upon them. Then they could be the powerful witnesses He intended they should be, in Jerusalem, and in Judaea, and in Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth. The book of Acts follows the outline suggested in this verse (Acts 1:8), recording first the work of the Gospel in Jerusalem and Judaea, then the ministry of Philip in Samaria, then the missionary enterprise of Barnabas and Paul to the ends of the earth. We should expect the baptism of the Holy Spirit to bring to us the **power** of the Holy Spirit. That is the significant characteristic of baptism of the Spirit. Certainly this was the most remarkable evidence in the life of Peter after he was filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Thereafter he powerfully witnessed before the chief priests and Pharisees and was not ashamed to acknowledge Jesus as his risen Lord. May we expect and receive this power from on high also.

IV Taken up: While Jesus spoke these things to His disciples, He was suddenly taken up from them. A cloud received Him out of their sight. They were not to see His earthly body again. We should understand the word "up" to be more than the direction up. It was into the higher spiritual realm that Jesus ascended. That realm is more real and lasting than the material, physical realm. Although Jesus was now unseen, He was not gone, for He had said unequivocally, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age." He was still with the disciples but in an invisible way. He is still with us and manifests His presence in many different ways. Some day, perhaps soon, our bodies shall be changed and we shall be "taken up" to that higher realm of life which is eternal. Two "men" appeared where Jesus had disappeared and assured the disciples that Jesus would come again in the same way as He had been taken into heaven. This is the hope before us: He is coming again.

V In Jerusalem: The disciples at once returned to Jerusalem from Mount Olivet. The disciples (the eleven) all lodged in an upper room. This is not where the Holy Ghost fell but the place where the disciples lodged while they tarried at Jerusalem waiting for the promise of the Father. The place of prayer where the women joined the eleven and many others, so that there were 120 present when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them, was at the temple and probably at Solomon's porch. No upper room in Jerusalem could have held 120 people and certainly no crowd of thousands could have assembled at any upper room. The place of prayer was at the temple and there the Holy Spirit fell and caused the assembling of the great crowd which heard Peter's sermon. The eleven with the faithful women and Mary the mother of Jesus all continued in one accord in prayer and supplication daily until the day of Pentecost was fully come.

VI Taking Judas' place: One day during this period of protracted prayer, Peter stood up and suggested that they choose someone to fill the place in the twelve which Judas had lost. He gave the condition for candidates that they must have known Jesus from His baptism by John to the ascension. He had to be a witness of the resurrection. Most interesting in Peter's speech is his interpretation of the Psalms 69:25 & 109:8, applying them to Judas. He must have received this interpretation from Jesus during the 40 days following His resurrection. The application of these prophetic passages to Judas would be obscure were it not for Peter's interpretation.

It seems, however, that Peter acted impulsively again here. He was restored to fellowship, but not yet filled with the Holy Spirit. Had they waited until they were endued with power from on high to consider the vacancy in the ranks of the apostles they might have done differently. The one finally chosen was Matthias, but he immediately fades into oblivion and is never heard of again. Their method of choice certainly would have been different had they tarried for the Holy Ghost. The leading of the Spirit is much superior to the casting of lots. Although the inspired record does not criticize the action of Peter, it would appear that the Lord ignored their choice by lot and later added His own twelfth apostle: one who labored more abundantly than they all. I fully expect to find Paul numbered with the twelve in the New Jerusalem on those foundation stones. No doubt, Peter and the others were perfectly sincere, but perhaps a bit hasty. Let us learn to wait for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the affairs of the kingdom of God and indeed in everything.

The Day of Pentecost

Read: Acts 2:1-47; Joel 2:28-32

Memory Work: But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. (Acts 2:16-18)

What we should learn from this Lesson.

1. Unity in prayer brings remarkable results.
2. The infilling of the Holy Spirit brings supernatural power and ability to the believer.
3. The kingdom of God is without discrimination. No one is excluded from this fellowship because of sex or nationality or race or social standing.
4. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives the believer boldness to witness and preach.
5. The work of the Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus.
6. The beginning of the work of God in souls is repentance.

I The Feast of Pentecost: This Jewish feast of Pentecost came 50 days after their Passover. Old traditions indicate that this feast marked the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, 50 days after the first Passover at the time of the exodus. It always fell on the first day of the week. It was observed in the time of Jesus, not so much as a religious holiday, but as a trade fair and a market day. Merchants came from all over the world to buy and sell at Jerusalem on that day. This accounts for the host of foreign speaking people in the city on that notable day in which the church of Jesus Christ was born. The disciples

of Jesus, meanwhile were not buying and selling, but were awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Ghost which Jesus had promised. They met daily in the temple. It was not in an upper room that the Spirit came but at the temple. Many had seen the Lord after His resurrection and had heard His words. One hundred and twenty were present on the glorious day when the Holy Spirit came to reside in the church. There were three notable manifestations. First there was the loud roar as of a fierce wind. This sound caused the people to run to the place where the 120 people were praying. They saw then, cloven tongues of fire sitting on each of these believers. Then they heard them clearly speaking forth the wonderful works of God in many different languages. The merchants from the many different places all heard their own languages spoken. More than a dozen foreign places are mentioned. Visitors from all these places heard the wonderful works of God proclaimed in their own tongues. They were amazed, for those speaking were almost all Galileans. They began to ask what this amazing demonstration could mean. Some mocked and joked that these people had gotten drunk on new wine.

We must note here that when the Holy Spirit came the disciples were "all with one accord in one place." That is a good way to get results from prayer. The Lord promised that if two believers would agree together regarding anything that it would be done by the Father in heaven (see Matthew 18:19). How much more when a larger group agrees together in one accord and in one place for the manifestation of the glory of God. Let us get together to pray in one accord. Great things can be accomplished by a few who dare to pray together and believe.

II Peter's inspired sermon: A huge crowd gathered. The apostles heard the taunts of the mockers. They all stood up and Peter lifted up his voice and preached the first Holy Ghost sermon to the multitude. He assured the people that he and his fellow disciples were not drunk as they supposed at nine o'clock in the morning. He explained that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel concerning the outpouring of the Spirit of God in the last days. Every objective witness present had to realize that something miraculous was taking place. Peter declared that what they were witnessing was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God on all flesh. The Jews in the audience were acquainted with the words of Joel. It is the most outstanding prophecy in the entire Old Testament about the coming of the Holy Spirit to the people of God.

After declaring what this unusual phenomenon was, Peter explains why it had now occurred. He showed them that Jesus of Nazareth was responsible for this demonstration of the glory and power of God. Peter listed seven facts concerning Jesus. First he declared his human name, Jesus of Nazareth. All knew who He was. Then Peter

declared that the seal of God's approval was given Jesus by signs and wonders which God wrought through Him. Third, Peter explained redemption by the cross. The sacrificial death of Jesus was foreordained of God, but those who crucified Him were guilty of great wickedness. The fourth and central fact about Jesus was that God raised Him from the dead on the third day because it was impossible for death to hold Him. Here the message of Peter contains an important parenthesis, He expounds the prophetic Psalm 16 of David, explaining that David died and was buried and the tomb was there in Jerusalem and the body buried and decayed. It was not of himself that David wrote but of the Messiah. God would not leave His body in the grave. Corruption could not fasten on that holy body. Because He had overcome every temptation and done all the will of God. Death is the result of sin and since there was no sin in Him, Jesus could not be held by death. He deliberately and willingly offered up His life to pay the price for our sins, but death could not hold Him.

Peter then continued with the fifth fact concerning Jesus; that He ascended to the Father and now was exalted to a place of glorious power. Sixth, He received the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, in His place at the right hand of God. Finally, He shed forth **this** which the crowd of curious inquirers was witnessing.

Peter boldly drove home his conclusion: that all the house of Israel should know for a certainty, that the very same Jesus whom they had so recently rejected and crucified was now exalted by God Almighty and made both King and Messiah.

III The altar call: The Holy Spirit was working not only in the 120, but also among the crowd. Many were convinced in their hearts. They asked what they must do. Peter told them that they must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins and that then they too, would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. By the inspiration of the Spirit Peter declared that the promise of the infilling of the Holy Spirit was not only for the 120, but for them also and for their children and to all that are afar off. Those words **afar off** were used to denote Gentiles. So Peter here explained that the Spirit would fall on Gentile believers also. He later was surprised when the Spirit came on Cornelius the Roman centurion and Gentile. The promise reaches even to us and thank God we, too, have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit coming on us from on high.

IV The results: We never know the full result of our Spirit inspired work for the Lord. That day 3,000 believers were added. The authorized version says they were added unto them. That is not correct. Later in the chapter we read that the Lord added **to the church**. That is not right either. The true meaning is difficult to express. Luke explained at the

beginning of his record that the Gospel of Luke was the account of what Jesus had begun to do and to teach. He implies that the story in the book of Acts is what Jesus continues to do and to teach not in his human individual body now, but in His body made up of the believers. That is what the 3,000 were added to: the mystical body of Jesus in this world. That is what God added to daily by such as were saved.

V The new fellowship: The 3,000 did repent and indeed were baptized in the name of Jesus. They learned the doctrine of the gospel from the apostles and continued to live by it. They also enjoyed fellowship with each other. They observed the breaking of bread (communion) and times of prayer. These four things are all an integral part of real Christian life today. By water baptism they found entrance into this new blessed society. Once in it they participated in all phases of Christian life. We need to learn the doctrine of the Gospel. Preaching and teaching meetings accomplish this. We need sound doctrinal teaching lest we be carried away by false teachings and heresies. We also need fellowship meetings. These differ from preaching and teaching services in that it is a time for all to participate. Free sharing of the blessing of the Lord and requests for help in prayer characterize a fellowship meeting. The timid should be urged to participate as well as the forward. Jesus must always be the center of a fellowship meeting. Politics and worldly concerns are to be avoided. We must continue in breaking of bread. A believer who does not attend the holy communion is sinning, for the Lord commanded His followers to partake till He comes again. Finally, these early believers prayed together. The Spirit fell when they prayed together in one place and of one accord. They continued to pray and so must we. The prayer meeting is a very important meeting. All believers should attend. Then signs and wonders will be wrought and the needs of all will be met and the Lord will add new believers to His own body all the time.