



MATTHEW:
THE KING AND HIS KINGDOM-II

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For more info contact:

Ruth Joy Capozzi

joycapozzi@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Matthew emphasizes the fact that Jesus is King and that His Kingdom is spiritual and in power now. This second quarterly covers those chapters which reveal: the mission of the King (chs.14-17); the fellowship of the Kingdom (18); the narrative of the King in Jerusalem (chs.19-23); the end of the natural Jewish kingdom and the consummation of the spiritual everlasting Kingdom (24-25); the narrative of the death and resurrection of the King (26-28:15); and the challenge of the Kingdom (28:16-20).

The recognition that Christ's Kingdom is NOW in power is very basic and important. Failure to grasp this truth leads the misguided believers to be looking far off into the future for the power he needs to overcome his faults and temptations, and for the enablement to effectively resist and defeat the power of the evil one. It was the power of the King, manifested at Pentecost which brought three thousand souls to the Lord and filled Jerusalem with the Doctrine and turned the world upside down for Christ. The power of the Holy Ghost has never been taken back from the church and only awaits believers to appropriate this available power.

Our fervent prayer is that the Lord will use these Bible lessons to inspire some to recognize and claim all the power of God's very present Kingdom.

The memory work for this quarter is a continuation of what was learned in the last quarter. We strongly urge that this passage of scripture be committed to memory and prayed over perseveringly. May God grant us ears to hear what the Spirit has to say to us!

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This series is now complete. The titles are listed below and are available to any and all:

The Men and Women of Genesis	The Miracles of Jesus
Lessons From Exodus	The Parables of Jesus
Wilderness Examples	The Personal Ministry of Jesus
Possessing the Land of Promise	According to Luke - I & II
The Days of the Judges	We Beheld His Glory (John-1)
Israel's Early Kings	Full of Grace & Truth (John-11)
Lessons From the Kings	Holy Ghost Acts - I
The Captivity and Return	Holy Ghost Acts - II
	Matthew: The King and His Kingdom - I & II

THE MINISTRY OF THE KING-I

Read: Matthew 14

Memory Verse: Review Matthew 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *John the Baptist successfully finished his ministry.*
2. *Guilt haunts those who commit wicked deeds.*
3. *The compassion of Jesus moved Him to heal the sick and feed the multitude.*
4. *Jesus manifested His glory to the disciples by walking on the sea.*
5. *Jesus taught Peter a valuable lesson regarding faith and fear.*

I John's Course Finished: When Herod (Antipas) heard of the miracles of Jesus, he feared that John the Baptist was risen from the dead. His fear was the result of a guilty conscience. Guilt activates our imaginations so that we fear the worst. Herod had first imprisoned John and finally beheaded him. The fearless preacher had denounced the wicked ruler for marrying his brother's wife. This marriage had taken place in Rome while each of them was absent from their partner. So enraged was the woman (Herodias) at John for denouncing their adulterous relationship, that she insisted that he be imprisoned. Herod had been favorably inclined toward John before (Mark 6:20), but now the influence of this vile woman turned him against John. On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced before Herod and so aroused his passion that he promised her anything to the half of his kingdom. Influenced by her evil mother, Salome asked for the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. Sorrowfully, for his oath's sake, Herod ordered John's execution. The severed head was presented to the girl who delivered it to her mother. But Herod could not forget John. When he heard of miracles occurring in his province, he presumed John was risen from the dead. He

must have slept poorly those nights. A good conscience makes a comfortable pillow.

But John's work was done. He had prepared the way for the Lamb of God. His birth was miraculous, his life and ministry were fulfilling, and when his work was finished his life ended at the age of about 32.

II Moved With Compassion: The Lord withdrew from Galilee when He heard of the execution of John. But no matter where He went the people sought Him out and followed Him. When He saw the multitudes, Jesus was moved with compassion. He healed all the sick amongst them. Luke mentions also that Jesus taught them about the kingdom of God.

If we are truly moved with compassion for the needy people around us, God will empower us to minister to those needs. God has set gifts of healing into His church, and when those gifts of healing are in operation, the crowds come to be healed and to witness the healings which take place. This gives the ministers of the Gospel the opportunity to teach the multitudes about the kingdom of God. We must expect the Lord to heal in our midst. The day of miracles is not passed: "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go unto my Father." Let us expect those greater works. The Lord does not intend to limit the operation of the gift of healing to one occasional holy man or woman of extraordinary faith. It is the birthright of the church. Pray for the healing power to be more greatly manifested in this assembly.

Compassion also moved the Lord to feed the hungry crowd with wholesome food. Toward evening the disciples had suggested to Jesus that He send the people away so that they could purchase food in the nearby villages and towns. But Jesus astonished the disciples by suggesting that they should give the great multitude food to eat. Five loaves and two fishes were all the food that the disciples could find. The other Gospel accounts give more details than Matthew and explain that Andrew had found a lad with the five loaves and two fish. Jesus asked for them and then made the crowd to sit down on the grass. He took the loaves and looking up to heaven, he blessed them and brake them and gave them to the disciples who in turn distributed the food to the throng of people. Imagine the astonishment of those disciples as they broke off pieces of bread to give to the people only to find the supply undiminished. Now there were five thousand men. Matthew notes that this was beside the women and children present. They had

not eaten all day long. Everyone not only ate, but they were filled. Truly, our Lord has enough for everyone; of the necessities of life, and of the bread of heaven. When Jesus ordered the disciples to gather the fragments after all were satisfied, they collected twelve baskets full. A sanctified imagination suggests that at least one of those baskets of fragments found its way to the home of the lad who had given his five loaves and two fishes to the Master. If we only consecrate ourselves and what little we may have to Jesus, there is no limit to how many needy may be blessed when the Lord takes us and blesses us and breaks us. Let us give Him our all.

III On a Mountain Alone: Such a miracle made Jesus a popular hero. They would have liked to crown Him king after this (John 6:15). But He was not interested in such honors. He quickly sent the disciples in a ship to the other side of Lake Galilee, while He Himself retired alone to a mountain to pray. If the Son of God found it necessary to pray for such protracted periods, it surely must be that we also must spend time seeking God in prayer if we are to fulfill God's will in these days. Our weakness and failures result from failure to pray aright. Each Christian must learn to pray for himself. We may get along blessedly for a while on the prayers of others for us, but ultimately we must pray through for ourselves or suffer shipwreck. May God help us to follow Jesus' example of prayer. It will not hurt us to skip a meal or two a week in order to give ourselves to prayer. If Jesus needed prayer to fulfill His ministry, you and I need more! Should we not resolve to increase our prayer time?

IV Contrary Winds: While Jesus prayed the disciples were in trouble in the midst of Galilee. The waves had risen with the wind. That wind was contrary, keeping them from making progress. During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the water. The fourth watch was from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. So Jesus had prayed most of the night through and the disciples had toiled most of the night. As Jesus walked on the water the disciples were terrified, thinking they saw a spirit. But Jesus reassured them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." How reassuring it is to have Jesus with us all the time. Sometimes the storms of life beat hard upon us, but how comforting are His promises, "I will never leave thee," and "Lo, I am with you alway." If Jesus goes with us we can go any where.

'Tis heaven to me
Where'er I may be
If He is there.

V Peter's Lesson: Now Peter wanted to walk on the water also so he cried out, "Lord if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus answered, "Come." So Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk toward Jesus on the water. What an experience that must have been! But when he took his eyes off of Jesus and began to consider the boistrous wind and raging waves, Peter began to sink. Then he cried out, "Lord save me." Jesus reached out and caught Peter and asked him, "wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?"

If we take our eyes off of Jesus and begin to consider the difficulties facing us, and the opposition, we too, will begin to sink. But if we keep our eyes on Jesus, He will enable us to do the impossible for His kingdom's sake.

When Peter and Jesus came into the ship, the wind stopped and all of the disciples fell at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Let us remember in times of trial when all seems contrary and the very foundations of our faith, shake, that the Son of God is for us. He is on our side. He will not allow us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. Let us get our eyes off of our troubles and onto the Lord. Let us cry out, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." We will surely hear His reassuring voice, "It is I, be not afraid."

VI Perfectly Whole: The precious cargo, Savior and disciples landed at Gennesaret. They had little opportunity for rest. As soon as the people of the area knew that Jesus was there they went out and gathered all the sick and suffering and besought Jesus to allow them only to touch the hem of His garment. "As many as touched Him were made perfectly whole." This is the Lord's way of healing: perfect, complete, instant deliverance. Our faith may fall short, but His power will never be diminished. We, too, may touch Him by faith. Let us press through every difficulty and hindrance and touch the Lord, believing. Every need will be met. All power is His, both in heaven and on earth. We have the right to expect the manifestation of His divine power here and now.

THE MINISTRY OF THE KING-II

Read: Matthew 15

Memory Work: Review Matthew 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The commandments of God are more important than religious traditions.*
2. *Consecration of our hearts to the Lord is more important than outward professions of piety.*
3. *What we eat passes through the body, but that which we speak is the fruit of what is in our hearts.*
4. *Those who are really determined to obtain the help of the Lord at any cost will receive their desire at last.*
5. *The Lord is always ready and anxious to feed the hungry multitudes and to heal their sick and suffering.*

I Commandments over Traditions: The Pharisees, who were constantly looking for something to criticize in Jesus, found fault with His disciples for eating without performing the traditional washing. Their particular and specific washings had become an important part of their religion. In their book of traditions many chapters were devoted to descriptions of washings. Before eating they were taught to wash their hands and arms up to the elbows. Now the Pharisees were horrified to see the disciples eat without this ceremonial washing. They asked Jesus why His disciples did not wash according to the custom.

Jesus turned the tables on them by asking them why they were so zealous to observe traditions of men while they blatantly disregarded the plain commandment of God. The Lord's commandment was plain and clear: that children were to honor their parents by supporting them in their older years. But the Pharisees taught that those gifts which would have gone to the

to the needy aged parents, if given to the temple and the support of its priests, excused the donors from obligation to the parents. Thus, by the traditions obviously inspired by covetousness, the Pharisees sanctioned disobedience to the direct commandment of God.

The deceitful human heart is quick to justify our disobedience. We can find many excuses and extenuating circumstances and the like. We can, like the Pharisees substitute religious traditions for simple obedience. Let us get our priorities straight. "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

II That Which Defileth: The Lord Jesus gathered the multitude around Him and taught them a kingdom lesson from the complaint of the Pharisees. This was an important part of the ministry of the King. Remember, His ministry is twice outlined as teaching, preaching and healing. When Jesus' ministry was complete, He prayed "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." This teaching of Jesus is included in those words.

The Pharisees felt that the disciples of Jesus had defiled themselves by eating without the customary washing of hands to the elbow. Now Jesus taught the whole multitude that, how and what a person eats does not defile him, but that which comes out of the mouth does defile him. Such stress was laid upon what was clean and unclean food and upon the ceremonial washings observed by the Jews, that the Pharisees were greatly offended by this teaching of Jesus. The dietary laws given by God to His people through Moses were for their health. But now the Pharisees, having forsaken true spiritual worship attached spiritual significance to that which was intended for physical well-being. Even today, great stress is placed upon the selection of food amongst the Jewish people. It is a vital part of their religion. To the strict observance of these dietary laws, the Jews attach spiritual virtue. It is much ado about nothing. God is concerned that we do not defile ourselves by our words. Murmuring and complaining, judging and criticizing others and many other sins of the tongue are expressions of what is in our hearts. This is what really defiles us in the sight of God.

The disciples told Jesus on the side that the Pharisees were offended by this teaching. The Lord told them to leave them alone. He declared that they were blind leaders of the blind and would inevitably fall into the ditch. But Peter and the disciples wanted an explanation of this teaching. It was diametrically opposed to what they had heard all their lives.

Patiently, Jesus explained that what you eat passes through the body in a matter of hours and has little or no effect on the spirit or heart. But the things which come out of our mouths as a result of wrong attitudes in the heart really and truly defile the individual in the sight of God. Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies all begin in the heart. Good common sense tells us that these are important things of a truly overcoming life. Beside these important attitudes the washing of hands in a certain ceremonial way is insignificant. To omit the tradition was not an offence to God, but only to the hypocritical Pharisees.

III Crumbs from the Master's Table: As Jesus passed through the territory of Tyre and Sidon a Syro-phenician woman came to Jesus, beseeching Him to heal her daughter. The girl was tormented by a demon. This Gentile woman called Jesus "thou son of David," and begged for mercy. Jesus ignored her. Then she tried to get help through the disciples. They asked Jesus to send her away because she bothered them so. At last Jesus rebuffed her by stating that He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The woman did not let this rebuff hinder her one bit. "Lord, help me" she pled. Then Jesus cast a withering rebuke at her; "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." This was the common attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles. Even this did not deter the importunate mother. Her response has immortalized her. "Truth, Lord," she said, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Now the Lord was moved. "O woman, great is thy faith, Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Oh! for a persistent faith like this! How easily we give up seeking for the Lord's deliverance. Let nothing deter us. May nothing offend us. This woman's ability to disregard rebuff and insult enabled her to lay hold of the deliverance she sought for her daughter. We must learn from this Gentile woman.

IV At Jesus' Feet: The Lord went up into a mountain near the Sea of Galilee and sat down there. The multitudes were not long in seeking Him out. They brought, the lame, the blind, the dumb, the maimed, and many others and "cast them down at Jesus' feet." Jesus healed them and caused the multitude to glorify the God of Israel. These sick ones were brought to the right place, down at the feet of Jesus. This is a good place for us all to find and frequent. May the place at His feet be glorious to us.

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V Another Miracle of Multiplication: The people stayed with Jesus for three days rejoicing in the healing power which was manifested, and no doubt listening attentively to His teaching. Now Jesus had compassion on the people. He did not want to send them away hungry, so He asked the disciples how many loaves they had. Seven loaves were found and a few small fish. Once again the Lord commanded the people to sit down on the ground while He took the bread and fish and gave thanks, broke and distributed them to the disciples and thence to the crowd. Again all ate and were filled. This time seven baskets of leftovers were gathered and this time four thousand men were fed. Once again, Matthew notes, four thousand men were fed beside women and children.

This is the second occurrence of a miracle of multiplying of the food for a hungry multitude which had followed Jesus. Mark also records the second feeding of the multitude. It is an interesting side light, that the Greek word for the baskets which gathered up the leftover fragments is a different word describing another type of basket from the kind used to gather the twelve basketfulls in the other miracle.

It is surely significant also that the miracles Jesus performed concerning food and drink were providing bread and the "wine" which symbolized His body and blood which He gave for the redemption of humanity. These sacred emblems of the Lord's supper remind us that His sacred flesh, and holy blood have been multiplied also to supply the cleansing agent for all our sins, and the life for all believers as well as the healing of all our sicknesses. Many more than five thousand or four thousand have partaken of this inexhaustible supply. And yet there is more than enough for all to receive a full portion. Praise His Name!

THE KING FORETELLS HIS SUFFERING

Read: Matthew 16

Memory Work: Review Matthew 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We should be able to discern the present kingdom of God from the signs of the resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*
2. *Outward forms and intellectual philosophies are vain. True believers must experience real inward changes and a supernatural enlightening of the understanding.*
3. *The Church of Jesus Christ stands upon the rock of faith that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God.*
4. *The Lord Jesus foresaw His suffering and taught that His followers also must be willing to "bear the cross" and suffer for Him. Beyond His suffering Jesus foresaw the glory of the Kingdom.*

I The Signs of the Times: The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus desiring Him to show them a sign. They did not believe that He was the Messiah. They looked for a political leader. Their unbelief blinded them to the signs they should have seen every day. When John the Baptist had a question as to whether or not Jesus was the one whose way he prepared, he sent two of his disciples to Jesus. They asked Jesus for John if He were the One. Jesus told them to show John what they saw: the blind and lame and lepers healed, the deaf made to hear and the dead raised to life. These signs should have convinced anyone that Jesus was God's Messiah. Although the Pharisees and Sadducees witnessed many of these miraculous cures they were blind to their significance, so they asked Jesus for another sign.

He rebuked them because they had learned to foretell the weather by the clouds in the sky. They must have had a

similar proverb to the sailor's guide today: "Red in the morning: sailors take warning, Red at night: sailors delight." The signs foretelling the weather, these religious leaders easily read, but their jealousy of Jesus and their prejudice toward Him blinded them to the most obvious signs of His Messiahship. Jesus called them a wicked and adulterous generation. He would give them no sign to satisfy their curiosity but referred once again (see Matt.12:39) to the sign of Jonah. This was looking forward to His death and resurrection.

The signs of the times which we should discern are first the resurrection of Jesus and then the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are living in the days of God's kingdom. We need not wait for some future millenium. All power is now in Jesus' hands. The remarkable conversions, the miraculous healings, and the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh indicate that we are living in the time of God's present kingdom. We need no telescope looking into the future to find the Kingdom of God. It is here and now! Satan has been bound. The kingdom is amongst us. Let us discern the signs of the times.

II The Leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees: Jesus turned and left the blind religious leaders. He went with His disciples by boat to the other side of the sea of Galilee. They must have left hurriedly and the disciples did not take along any bread. On the way Jesus warned the disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." The mention of leaven made the disciples think of bread. Their foolish reasoning led them to think that Jesus was talking about bread. This is so common to human nature. The spiritual lessons the Lord tries to teach us are all too often applied to our daily bread, that is, to natural, material things. Jesus had to be specific with them. It was not what kind of bread they ate which was so important, but that they did not swallow the defiling materialistic doctrine of the Pharisees or the sophisticated reasoning of the proud Sadducees.

The Pharisees' doctrine disregarded the desires and attitudes of the heart which Jesus laid such stress upon. They made "clean the outside of the platter (Luke 11:39) but their inward parts were full of ravening and wickedness." They were like whitewashed sepulchres; lovely to look on from without, but full of dead bones and uncleanness within. They were exceedingly zealous for traditional forms and outward observance of certain laws but disregarded the importance of inward desires and attitudes. Against such religion, we too, need beware!

The Sadducees were the modernists of their day. Intellectuals in their own eyes, they prided themselves on being enlightened. They denied the supernatural. Life after death was a myth to them. Angels and spiritual powers were relegated to the category of fairy tales. There is a similar element in the church today. Denying the supernatural in this day, they pride themselves for their enlightenment. Intellectualism (unconsecrated and unsanctified), like wealth, often stands in the way and hinders the gracious work of redemption. Let us beware of this leaven in this age when such stress is given to intellectual attainment.

III Upon This Rock: When they had crossed the sea of Galilee and entered the area of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked the disciples whom the multitudes regarded Him to be. They told Jesus that some thought that He was John the Baptist risen from the dead. Herod (see Matt.14:2), who had beheaded John, held this view (or fear). The disciples told Jesus that some of the people thought that He was Elijah risen from the dead. This because the last of the sacred writings of the Old Testament promised that Elijah would come "before the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal.4:5). Jesus had explained to some of His disciples that John the Baptist was the fulfillment of this prophecy (Matt.11:14). Still others of the people thought Jesus to be Jeremiah or some other prophet.

But when Jesus asked the disciples their own estimation of His person, Peter spoke for them, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he declared (vs.16). Jesus was impressed with this powerful expression of faith by Peter. It is this truth, so simply and powerfully stated by Peter which is the foundation doctrine of the true church of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus commended Peter for his expression of faith. This truth had dawned upon Peter, not as a result of his own reasoning, but because of a Divine revelation from the Father in heaven.

Peter is not the foundation of the church, or we would be on shaky ground. The truth which he gave expression to is indeed the foundation of all doctrine in the church of which Jesus Himself is the foundation (I Cor.3:11).

Peter was given a specific honor by the Lord Jesus at this time. He was given, by the word of the Lord, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (vs.19). To be sure Peter held the preeminence amongst the original twelve. And to him was granted the privilege to preach that first grand anointed sermon when the

Holy Ghost first fell on Pentecost. The key of repentance opened the door of salvation for three thousand souls that day. Not long after, another key opened the beautiful gate of Divine Healing for the church, when with John, Peter raised the lame man at the temple gate. A third key of the kingdom was used by Peter when he opened the door to the Gentiles by preaching Christ to Cornelius, the Roman centurion. So in a very real way the keys were given to Peter. The context, includes authority to bind and loose on earth with the backing of the powers of the heavenly kingdom.

IV The Way of the Cross: After this, Jesus began to prepare the disciples for the ordeal they would all have to endure culminating in His crucifixion. He told them that He would suffer many things and then be killed and then rise again on the third day. Now Peter, probably full of self-confidence from his recent revelation and commendation, began to rebuke the Lord Jesus and tell Him that this could not be. No doubt it seemed to Peter to be inconsistent with what the Father had revealed to him. But now, Peter who had just enjoyed such a commendation, suffered a scorching rebuke. The Lord recognized that Satan was using Peter to tempt Him to turn from the way of the cross. "Get thee behind me, Satan" was not directed at Peter personally, for the Lord loved and prayed for Peter, but being not yet filled with the Holy Spirit the enemy was able to use Peter. Some of the most dangerous attacks on the Lord's workers today, come not from without from outright enemies of the gospel, but from those within who are ruled by the values of men and not of God.

Not only did Jesus foresee the cross for Himself but He demanded that all who truly follow Him must deny themselves and take up the cross and follow Him. There is no profit in gaining all the world and losing our soul. Is there anything this world can offer that is worth selling our eternal souls for? God forbid! But Jesus saw beyond the cross to the glory, both for Himself and His followers. Thank God that beyond every cross is glory. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Does your cross seem heavy? The glory will outweigh the cross if you are faithful.

THE GLORY OF THE KING - (THE TRANSFIGURATION)

Read: Matthew 17

Memory Work: Review 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Peter, James, and John beheld the glory of God manifested in Jesus on the mount of transfiguration.*
2. *Moses and Elijah are representatives of the law and the prophets.*
3. *They spake of Jesus' exodus, His death, resurrection and ascension.*
4. *God's voice owns Christ as His Son.*
5. *There is a definite relationship between faith and fasting and prayer.*
6. *Jesus set the example concerning payment of taxes.*

I The Transfiguration: It was Jesus' habit to spend much time in prayer. On several occasions He took some of the disciples with Him. Peter, James and John were privileged to be with Jesus on several such prayer vigils. Now six days after Jesus had spoken to the disciples of His impending death and resurrection (see Matt.16:23), He took the three choice disciples with Him and went up into a mountain to pray. Since they were in the region of Caesarea Philippi the unnamed mountain was most likely Mount Hermon. This fits the description of "a high mountain." They probably did not climb to the very summit for Hermon is snow-covered at its peak. Probably, too, it was toward evening for Jesus was often in communion with the Father during the night. The climb must have tired the disciples so they were ready to sleep. But as Jesus prayed something startling happened. In the dim light of evening, the face of Jesus suddenly began to glow with a heavenly light like the

sun. His clothing also, became luminescent, as white as the light. The glory of God shone through the temple of clay which Jesus inhabited. Most interesting that this should happen at this time before His resurrection. It would seem to suggest that now in this life God would like to manifest His glory in these mortal bodies in a way beyond that which we have yet experienced.

But another startling thing happened there on the mount. Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus. Luke explains that they spake with Jesus about His decease which would take place in Jerusalem. The original text of the word translated "decease" is really "exodus." This is a significant word, for the exodus of Jesus from the world included not only His decease, but also His resurrection and ascension. It is noteworthy that Moses, who drew so near to God on the Mount of God in Old Testament times appears here in the Gospel age once again on the mountain top. Though prevented from entering Canaan during his natural lifetime, at last Moses did set his feet in the promised land. The Old Testament is often divided into the two categories of the law and the prophets. Moses is the representation of the law and Elijah, the foremost of the prophets, represents that category. The inspired authors of the Gospels thus very decisively connect the Lord Jesus with the law and the prophets. The Gospel does not stand in opposition to the law and the prophets, but declares that Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophecies of the prophets. The Bible is a whole unit.

II Hear Him: Peter, groggy with sleep, and knowing not what to do, said "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While Peter was still speaking foolishly, a luminous bright cloud overshadowed them and God's own voice sounded forth from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." God spoke to humanity in the Gospel age through Jesus, His Son. One commandment, however, is given audibly, God speaking from heaven. What importance this gives to this unique commandment. It is simply "Hear Him." Are we doing it? Are we finding out and obeying all the commandments and teachings of Jesus, the Son of God? All of the grace of God, and all of the power of the Holy Spirit are offered to us in this Gospel age to enable us to obey His commandments and keep His sayings. Let us make this our greatest objective in life, and so prove our love for Christ.

The disciples were frightened by the voice and fell on their faces. Jesus came to them and touched them and told them not

to be afraid. When they lifted themselves from the ground they saw no one but Jesus. Jesus asked them not to speak of the majestic vision until He was risen from the dead. They did not understand what He meant by "risen from the dead," but they followed his instruction not to speak of the things they had seen. When John finally did speak of it he said in the opening of his Gospel "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

How long all of this took we can only estimate. It seems probable that they were all night on the mountain and descended on the following day. The disciples' minds got to working and they probably were wondering if the appearance of Elijah there had anything to do with the prophecy of Malachi foretelling that Elijah would come before the "day of the Lord." When they brought the subject before Jesus, He made them to understand that Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist.

III Nothing Shall Be Impossible: When the Lord and the three disciples returned from the glorious mountaintop experience, there was a problem awaiting them. A distraught father had brought his son to be healed. Not finding Jesus present, he applied to the disciples, but they failed in their attempt to deliver the lad from the evil power which had plagued him. Now, seeing Jesus, the father came kneeling to Him. He explained that the boy often would fall into a fire or water. The evil one sought to destroy the boy's life. Jesus rebuked the unbelief of the present generation and told the father to bring the boy to Him. When Jesus rebuked the demon it departed at once and from that hour the boy was cured.

The disciples had healed many sick and had cast out demons. Twice, Jesus had sent them out on missions of healing to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. They had rejoiced that even the demons were subject to them, but now they were helpless before this stubborn case. They wanted to know why they were thwarted in their efforts to bring deliverance to this tortured lad. Jesus explained that the root cause of their failure was unbelief. He taught them that faith like a grain of mustard seed (very small seed) would enable them to command the removal of a mountain. Faith brings us to the place where, "nothing shall be impossible to you." How then shall we obtain faith, as a grain of mustard seed, which can bring about the impossible? Jesus said that this kind (of demon) cannot be cast out except by fasting and prayer. We know too little about this kind of intercession today. We like

everything in an instant including the answer to our prayers. Thank God, some are answered that way. But are there not many things that have stubbornly refused to be changed despite our prayers. Is it not possible that some of these cases could be conquered through fasting and prayer? Great persevering prayer brings great faith. We may do very well to ask God to give us light about fasting and prayer. With God all things are possible.

IV Foretelling His Death: Once again Jesus told the disciples of His impending betrayal and death. He also promised that on the third day He would rise again. Matthew records that this made the disciples sorry. Both Mark and Luke comment that the disciples did not understand what He meant and were afraid to ask Him.

V Jesus Sets a Good Example: When the Lord and His disciples came to Capernaum those who collected the temple-tax asked Peter if Jesus paid His tax. Peter, always quick with words, hastily answered, "Yes." When he came into the house where Jesus was, the Lord asked Peter if the kings of the world demanded tribute of their own nation or of those whom they conquered. Peter answered quickly again, "of strangers." "Then the children are free," Jesus reasoned. The disciples were children of the kingdom and the temple was the house of the king so they should not have to pay this tax. Nevertheless Jesus said, and this incident is really full of humor, "lest we offend go and cast a hook into the sea." He told Peter that he would find a piece of money in the mouth of the first fish he caught. With the money Peter was to pay the temple tax for himself and for Jesus. So Peter and Jesus filed a joint return that year. The scriptures teach that it is our duty to pray for our rulers, obey their laws, and pay the taxes exacted from us. In this, Jesus was a good example.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE KINGDOM

Read: Matthew 18

Memory Work: Matthew 5:1-12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Pride and status have no place in the fellowship of the kingdom of God.*
2. *To cause someone to be lost is a very serious matter demanding the deepest carefulness in our conduct.*
3. *Division and disunity hinder effective prayer. Therefore we must do all possible to maintain holy unity.*
4. *The Lord is anxious to manifest His Presence where two or three or more gather in His name.*
5. *It is absolutely essential that Christians learn to forgive from their hearts those who wrong them.*

I Who Is Greatest: Despite the glorious manifestation on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples were soon squabbling again over who was the greatest. Like little boys after a ball game arguing over who is the best, the disciples acted in a childish manner. Good sense and decency decrees, "Let another man praise thee and not thine own mouth" (Prov.27:2). Nor was this the only time this attitude surfaced in the disciples. At least on two other occasions they argued amongst themselves as to who was the greatest (see Luke 9:46-48, and Matthew 20:20-28).

Jesus called a child and set him in the midst of the disciples and warned them that unless they were turned about from their conceited ways and became like this young child, they could not enter the kingdom of God. The way of the world is that the greater the individual the more he is served by others. But this is turned upside down in God's kingdom. There, the one who serves the best is greatest. Jesus set the

example Himself, for He came not to be served, but to minister to others and indeed to give His life that we might be saved.

It is the unsanctified heart that seeks honor from men and desires to be served and exhibit status by being served. So shall it not be among the true disciples of Jesus. Let us learn of Him for He is meek and lowly in heart. Instead of thinking of ourselves so much and how we can obtain honor we ought to be concerned with the welfare of little children and how we can inspire them to know and love Jesus more.

Recently an aspiring minister asked me to help him open a church just for professional people. To be sure there is a need among such people, but more likely pride and materialism motivated this man to minister to doctors, lawyers and professors. How about reaching boys and girls for Jesus. By far, the greatest percentage of born again Christians were saved before they reached twenty. The boys and girls are important to the Lord and they ought to be so to us also.

II The Danger of Offending: It is inevitable that there will be hypocrites in the church. Jesus warned that it would be so. The enemy sows his tares among the wheat. But it is not inevitable that you or I should become one of these hypocrites and thereby offend or stumble someone. Two of the strongest warnings in the New Testament are found in Matthew 18. The first is a warning of the seriousness of causing someone, especially "one of these little ones" to be offended and therefore perish. All of our actions must be weighed in the light of what God thinks of them and how they will affect others. A mature Christian ought not to be stumbled by the most outrageous conduct of a professing Christian. The mature believer should have learned to look to Christ alone as His example. But with the young and with the new Christians it is another story. We must needs do violence to ourselves and deny ourselves however much is necessary in order to avoid offending anyone in the kingdom of God. A good example of this is found in St. Paul's testimony that if eating meat or drinking wine caused a believer to be offended then he was willing to abstain from meat and wine for the rest of his life. That is a proper attitude. While the world stands I will refrain from doing those things which, although my conscience does not forbid them, may cause some believer to be offended and lost. It is virtuous to sacrifice some of our own liberties for the sake of not offending others.

The Lord came to seek and save the lost. If after they are found we cause them to be offended and lose their way again we

displease the Lord. It is God's will, that not one of these young believers shall perish.

III The Benefits of Unity: The enemy is alert to bring division into the fellowship of believers whenever possible. The Holy Spirit was first outpoured when one hundred and twenty gathered together in one place and were of one accord. The unity of believers is necessary for the perfect working of the Holy Spirit. Pride and jealousy divide. Misunderstandings often cause division. In a congregation of believers there are bound to arise difficulties and misunderstandings. The Lord here teaches what we are to do when such things occur. First, private settlement should be sought. If wrong attitudes persist then two or three spiritual witnesses and advisers should be included in another conference. If all fails then the offensive individual may be publicly reprimanded and considered as an outsider. This instruction is given not to teach how to discipline, but how to preserve precious unity.

Unity in prayer brings miraculous results. The promise is repeated here, and this time not directed to Peter alone, that whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. This is a promise for as few as two praying in unity (vs.19). This promise is of special value to a Christian husband and wife. Just the two of them can kneel in prayer and claim this promise. If two agree concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by the Father in heaven. The promise is not confined to husband and wife, but is good for any two believers who agree together for some desired need to be met.

Finally, the beautiful fellowship of believers is promised the greatest of all blessings, the manifestation of the Presence of our Lord where two or three (or more) gather together in His name. The Lord wants His followers to learn to overcome every temptation toward discord in the fellowship of believers. Yet, of course, this is not to be at the cost of lowering His standard of holiness.

IV Forgiving From the Heart: Peter must have had some disagreement with Andrew his brother. They had been partners in business and it is easy to imagine that with someone as impulsive and outspoken as Peter, there were bound to be grievances. Perhaps Andrew, for the seventh time, ruined a fishing net by forgetting to wash it. Whatever the cause, Peter asked Jesus how often he was required to forgive his brother.

"Until seven times?" he suggested. Not seven Jesus replied, but seventy times seven (without limit). Jesus told the story then to illustrate how and why we must forgive from our hearts those who wrong us. A certain king found that one of his servants owed a vast sum. The king ordered that the servant, his wife, children and possessions all to be sold and payment made. The servant, however, appeared before the king and besought him to have patience with him and promised to pay it all. So moved with compassion was the king that he cancelled the entire debt. This debt was about 10 million dollars in our currency.

The fortunate servant went out at once and found another servant who owed him the mere pittance of 17 dollars. Despite the very same appeal by his debtor that had brought full forgiveness to him, the unforgiving servant refused to give his debtor any time to raise the funds but had him cast into the debtors prison till he should pay the last penny.

The other servants reported these actions to the king. Furious, the king called for the ungrateful servant and reprimanded him for his unforgiving spirit. He was cast into prison, not to be released till he had paid all that was due the king.

Here follows the second of those strong teaching of Jesus in this chapter which we do well to consider carefully, "So likewise shall my Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." Let us make sure that we forgive those who wrong us, not only with our lips, but from our hearts. Sometimes we harbor ill feelings in the heart which we would not dare express with our lips. Before we can have fervent love between believers we must learn to forgive from the heart.

This teaching is given in the context of preserving the unity of the believers. How can we pray together if we have not forgiven from the heart the wrongs that have been committed against us. Since our king has freely forgiven us the great incalculable wrongs we have committed against Him, let us not be so small as to deny forgiveness from the heart, to those who, in a much more petty way, have wronged us. How blessed it is for believers to dwell together in unity.

THE TEACHING OF THE KING

Read: Matthew 19:1-27

Memory Work: Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Matthew 5:13

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Multitudes are attracted to Jesus by His healing power.*
2. *God instituted marriage as a permanent earthly relationship.*
3. *Marriage should be entered into prayerfully and carefully and advisedly.*
4. *Some are called to remain unmarried in order to better serve the Lord.*
5. *We are to regard children highly and do all possible to lead them to Christ and His kingdom.*
6. *Total consecration is necessary to progress toward spiritual perfection.*
7. *Wealth is usually an obstacle to entering the kingdom of God.*
8. *The Lord rewards those who make sacrifices for His name's sake.*

I The Coasts of Judea: Jesus left Galilee and began that fateful journey to Judea and Jerusalem which would culminate in His crucifixion. Moses and Elijah had spoken with the Lord of His decease (or exodus) which He should accomplish at Jerusalem (see Luke 9:31). Now Jesus entered the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan. There great multitudes met and followed Him and He healed their sick. The jealous Pharisees also met Jesus, but with hostility.

11 Teaching on Divorce: The Pharisees had conspired to trap the Lord into criticizing the law of Moses. For such an offence they could formally indict Him. Their question was, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus had previously dealt with the distorted doctrine of the Pharisees concerning divorce. Their great emphasis was the writing of divorcement. Moses had commanded that a legal document of divorce be given to the woman. The instruction of Moses was intended to make divorce difficult and to protect the woman from slander. The Pharisees allowed divorce for any trivial cause, justifying that it was permissible so long as the papers were made out. The paper was the important thing. They were not concerned with the reason for divorce.

Jesus set forth a high standard for marriage and in no uncertain terms taught the permanence of this sacred relationship. First, Jesus recalled that God the creator had instituted marriage. He recalled how it was "in the beginning." When God recognized that even in Paradise it was not good for man to be alone, He formed woman from man and declared that man should leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. Through the marriage relationship the man and woman become one flesh. This is an act of creation on God's part. Since it is God who makes the two one, obviously it is a serious thing to undo God's work. When the Pharisees questioned then why Moses taught that a writing of divorce should be given, Jesus explained that God allowed and arranged that because of their persistent disobedience. The necessity of legal papers was intended to be a deterrent to easy divorce and a protection for the woman involved.

The intention of God from the beginning was not so. Marriage was to be a permanent relationship. Only for the cause of adultery did Jesus allow divorce, and even that with the warning that remarriage for the divorced individuals would cause further adultery and guilt.

So astonished were the disciples at this teaching that they concluded that under such circumstances a man would be better off unmarried. The impact of this teaching on us today is clear. Marriage is not to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. Careful, prayerful consideration should precede marriage. No born again believer should consider marriage with an unsaved partner. Even amongst believers, Divine guidance should be sought that when the marriage is solemnized both parties are assured that they are in the will of God.

III For the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake: When the startled disciples expressed their opinion that under such conditions it was better for a man not to marry, Jesus explained that all men could not remain unmarried. He noted the fact that some men were born physically unable to raise a family; some, as in the case of Daniel and his three friends, were crudely mutilated to render them impotent; and some in consecration to God for His kingdom's sake sacrificed the marriage relationship voluntarily. This was not a rule or command laid down by the Lord, but an observation and suggestion that some, who were able, might be called that way.

Shakers, and other groups have in the past given undue prominence to this subject even forbidding to marry. Of course, the inevitable result was, no Sunday School, and finally, no parishioners.

IV Of Such is the Kingdom: It is most interesting that immediately following this tactful teaching on celibacy for the kingdom of heaven's sake, the Lord Jesus takes the little children, the fruit of marriage, and lays His hands upon them to pray for them and bless them. The disciples, with this startling subject still on their minds began to rebuke the children and send them away. But Jesus advised that the children be allowed to come to Him, "for of such," He declared, "is the kingdom of heaven." The Lord's teaching was startling at times but His balance and good common sense are rare and obviously Divine. "Never man spake like this man."

V What Good Thing: After Jesus laid His hands on the little children He departed from that place. Then a young man came running to Jesus and asking Him: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Perhaps the young man felt quite righteous. He used the word good so frequently that it prompted Jesus to ask, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God." The seeker must have sensed a definite lack in his spiritual life. He desired something more than he had yet experienced. Jesus directed the earnest enquirer to the commandments. He asked which commandments and Jesus referred him to those embraced by the summary command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The young man avowed that he had kept all of these since his youth. He no doubt judged himself in the light of the doctrine of the Pharisees or he would have recognized the inward attitudes as falling short.

VI If Thou Wilt Be Perfect: Jesus did not simply say to him, "Believe and all will be well," but after mentioning the commandments, dealt further with him about his desire for eternal life; "If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven! and come and follow me." There are those who teach that all our deeds, good or bad are irrelevant to our eternal life and our perfection. Faith in Christ and the grace of God is held out as the only necessity for inheriting the promises of God. Yet this very faith in Christ and the grace of God are the very things which enable us to obey the commandments and to consecrate all we are and have and hope for to Christ alone. Faith and obedience bring us eternal life and absolute consecration will lead us into Christian perfection. Let us be sure that our affections are set on things above. It may not be riches for us, but some other earthly love or desire. All must go on the altar of consecration if we would be perfect. Note all that Jesus told the young man to do: keep (the commandments), go and sell, give, and come and follow. All this, of course, presupposes faith in Christ as the Savior and Son of God. We, too must couple our faith in Christ with obedience to His Word and obedience to the leading of His Spirit.

VII Riches Hinder: The young man turned away sorrowfully at Jesus' instruction. He had great possessions. He was unwilling to pay that price. His possessions had possession of him. Another Gospel account of the incident reveals that Jesus beholding the young seeker loved him. What an opportunity the rich young ruler lost that day, when he turned and went away, choosing to keep his possessions and forfeit the approval and friendship of Jesus.

The Lord used the incident to teach the disciples the danger of riches. He again shocked the disciples by declaring that it was almost impossible for a rich man to be saved. The traditional attitude of the Jews was that riches were a sign of God's blessing and favor. This was a new and startling teaching to the disciples. There is nothing that contends more earnestly for the affection of a man's heart than earthly possessions (money and property etc.). But the disciple of Christ is to be a pilgrim here and keep the heavenly city always in view. "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also," Jesus had said. His teaching is consistent. Let us lay up treasure in heaven.

THE DIFFERENT NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

Read: Matthew 19:27-30; 20:1-34

Memory Work: Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Matthew 5:14

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Any sacrifice we make for the kingdom of God's sake will be richly rewarded.*
2. *Every born again believer has a responsibility to go to work in the Lord's vineyard.*
3. *The Lord's workers need not bargain with Him for their wages. His generosity goes beyond fairness.*
4. *Not only is the Lord's system of rewards different and better than the worldly method, but also honors are given on a greatly different basis than in the world's system.*
5. *Crying out for deliverance will draw the attention of the Lord who is ready and anxious to meet our needs.*

I What Shall We Have? Jesus told the rich young ruler that if he wanted to be perfect that he should sell his possessions and give to the poor and then he would have treasure in heaven. This caused the rich young ruler to go away sorrowfully. The heavenly reward was not as highly esteemed as the present possessions. Jesus told His disciples that it was nigh to impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Peter, immediately began to compare himself and his fellow disciples who did leave all to follow Jesus, with this rich young ruler who would not. He said to the Lord, "Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have?" Jesus responded that those who continued with Him, in the regeneration when He would reign upon His throne, would also sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He further promised that

every one who left loved ones or possessions for His sake would be rewarded in this life (however with persecution) and in that to come, with eternal life. "But" he warned, "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Matt.19:30).

II Go Work in My Vineyard: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder" Jesus explained, "which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard" (Matt.20:1). These workers agreed to work for one penny for the day. At the third hour (9 a.m.) the householder found more workers standing idle in the marketplace. He sent them to work in the vineyard promising to pay them "whatsoever is right." Again at the sixth hour and ninth hour, (noon and 3 p.m.) he did likewise and finally at the eleventh hour (5 p.m.) he sent others into his vineyard. He asked them why they stood idle all the day and they explained that no one had hired them. He promised that they would receive whatsoever was right. They trusted him and went to work for the last hour of the twelve hour working day.

So when even was come (the six o'clock whistle), the master told his steward to call the workers and pay them their hire. He began with the last, those who had worked only one hour. They were paid one penny. Those who had been hired first, who had labored twelve long hours, of course, expected to receive more, even though they had agreed to work for the one penny. When they were given the one penny, they murmured that the master had made them equal to those who had labored only one hour while they had worked through the heat of the entire day. But the master explained that he did them no wrong, for they had bargained for and agreed upon one penny for the day's wages. If he chose to be generous with his pay toward the others, that was his right.

The point of the parable was for Peter first of all and for all of us who are made of the same stuff as Peter: don't worry about the reward. You can trust the generosity and love of the heavenly householder. If you bargain for a stipulated reward you may find out that had you left it to the Master, the reward would have been greater. Another lesson to be learned from this parable is that the seniority system of the kingdom of heaven differs from that of the union contracts of workers in this life. Length of time as a believer does not guarantee a big reward. Many who are first shall be last and the last first. What is important is that we go when He calls us and

that we trust Him. He is not a greedy capitalist who exploits His workers, but a generous Father who wants the best for His children.

Jesus did say to His disciples that they who had stuck with Him would in no wise lose their reward. Those who have followed and served our Lord for many years are worthy of honor and surely will receive reward in the resurrection kingdom. However, there is danger in supposing that just because we have been saved fifty or sixty years we will get a greater reward than those who have followed Christ for a shorter time.

III Seats of Honor in the Kingdom: Jesus was traveling steadily toward Jerusalem. There, He knew the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion would take place. Once again He took the disciples aside and tried to prepare them for the dark days that lay ahead of them. He specifically told them that He would be crucified and that He would rise again on the third day. It seems that these warnings of Jesus did not register in the thinking of the disciples. They probably thought that He was speaking in spiritual, representative terms. They were interested in natural things.

The mother of James and John now approached the Lord and asked for a favor from Him. When Jesus asked what she desired, she requested that her two sons might be given the seats of honor on the right hand and on the left in the kingdom of our Lord. Jesus had recently told Peter that in the regeneration, the disciples would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Taking this promise very naturally, the two sons of Zebedee got their mother (Salome) to ask for the two most honorable seats. They wanted places of honor. But Jesus asked them directly if they were able to drink of the cup (symbol of wrath and judgment) that He was to drink of, and to be baptized (symbol of death) with the baptism which He would be baptized with. They presumptuously answered, "We are able." But Jesus revealed that even though they would endure similar affliction to His own, the places at His right and left hand in the kingdom would be given to those for whom it was prepared of His Father. James was the first to suffer martyrdom and John was later banished to Patmos for his testimony of Jesus.

Jesus used the episode as an occasion to show how the most honor is given to the best and most faithful servant in the heavenly kingdom. Great persons of the world exercise authority. They order many lesser people to serve them. But in the

heavenly kingdom the greatest honor is to be the most faithful, obedient servant. He who serves Christ and others best is the most honorable.

Pride and self-esteem motivate people to desire the most honorable seats. This same attitude creeps into the church. Too much attention is given to where we sit (at dinners or on the platform). The important thing is not where we sit, but how we serve. No servant of God should ever be offended because he was not seated properly. Let us delight to be of use to God and His people in any way possible, counting it joy to perform the humblest tasks. Jesus set us the perfect example. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt.20:28).

IV For Crying Out Loud: This scene took place as Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho on their way to Jerusalem. Great crowds were following Jesus on that famous road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Two blind men sitting on the side of the road heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. One of them was Bartimaeus and the other unnamed (see Mark 10:46). When they knew that Jesus was near by, they began to cry out, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on us." The multitude rebuked them and told them to hold their peace. But so much the more, they shouted and cried out, "Have mercy on us." Finally, their outcry produced the desired result. Jesus stood still and called them, asking, "What will ye that I shall do unto thee?" They responded, "Lord that our eyes may be opened." The compassionate Savior touched their eyes and immediately sight was restored. Then they followed Jesus.

There is a time for quiet seeking and waiting on the Lord, but some needs are best met by crying out loud to the Lord. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." These men were glad that they did not keep still. Here we may also learn the importance of being specific with the Lord. He must have known and seen what their need was, but only when they specifically requested restoration of their sight did the Lord heal them. We must tell the Lord all about our needs. Specific prayers bring specific results which glorify God.

BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH

Read: Matthew 21; Zechariah 9:9

Memory Work: Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Matthew 5:15

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Even the triumphal entry into Jerusalem by the Lord Jesus, was foretold by the inspired Old Testament prophets.*
2. *The Lord is pleased with the praises of His people, including praise from boys and girls.*
3. *The Lord has a right to expect the fruit of righteousness from our lives.*
4. *The Lord desires works of obedience from us and not just words from our lips.*
5. *Just as the nation of Israel was judged for their disobedience and rejection of the rule of God, we too, will be in danger of eternal loss if we do not render the fruit of holiness and service to God.*

I Hosanna in the Highest: By the wonderful word of knowledge Jesus instructed the disciples how to obtain a young colt for the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. The Lord sat on it and as He approached Jerusalem the crowd grew. They tore branches from the trees and cast their garments in the way and cried out, "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest." No doubt many in the crowd had been healed by the Lord. Others had witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Of course, the children joined in the praises of Jesus. As the jubilant throng swept through the gate and into the city, all Jerusalem was moved. "Who is this?" they questioned, and the shouting multitude replied, "Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. The

Pharisees were greatly provoked that the children called Jesus the son of David. That title was reserved for the Messiah. They wanted Him to stop them, but He quoted from Psalm 8 and explained that from these little ones the "perfected praise" was in order. How important that our Sunday school boys and girls learn to praise the Lord.

The choice of the young colt for the triumphal entry was foretold by the prophet Zechariah (see 9:9). This shows once again how the events of our Lord's earthly life were not accidental but the careful working out of God's wonderful plan of redemption.

II Cleansing the Temple: After Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem with palms and hosannas, He once again purged the temple of its mercantile exchange. Once before, early in His ministry Jesus had chased out those who bought and sold (John 2:13-17). Now Jesus drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple again. He overturned the tables of the money changers, and said, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." When the merchants had been chased out, the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and he healed them. The chief priests and scribes were irate at Jesus' actions. They resented the praise and acclaim of the crowd. Very probably a percentage of the business in the temple was taken by the Pharisees. It has been thought that Caiphaz himself controlled the sale of sheep and oxen for the sacrifices. Naturally, the disruption of business and loss of revenue would make them angry.

III The Fig Tree: In the evening Jesus went to Bethany, no doubt to the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, where He stayed during this last week before His crucifixion. In the morning on the way back to Jerusalem and the temple Jesus noticed a fig tree and went to pick some. He found no figs, but only leaves on the tree. Jesus cursed the tree. The next morning as they passed the tree again the disciples were astonished to see the tree already dead and dried up from the roots.

The fig tree is often used in the Bible as a figure representing Israel. While the Lord used the experience to show the power of believing prayer, there is an unmistakable picture of Israel in the cursing of the fig tree. It suggests, as does the parable of the wicked husbandmen, that when no fruit was yielded by the privileged nation of Israel, that the nation would be cut off.

IV Challenge of Authority: When Jesus returned to the temple after having purged it of its buying and selling, the chief priests and elders of the people came and interrupted Jesus as He was teaching the people. They demanded to know by what authority He presumed to do these things. Jesus turned the tables on them once again. "I also will ask you one thing," He reasoned, "which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things" (Matt.21:24). Jesus then put them on the spot by asking them whether they regarded the baptism of John as inspired by God or simply the idea of a man. Now they had a perplexing problem. If they said it was of God, they knew Jesus would say, "Why then did ye not believe him?" But if they said it was of men they feared the public reaction for John had become a sacred hero and was revered as a prophet. They finally decided that they could not, or rather dared not answer Jesus' question. Jesus responded in kind by saying, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things" (Matt.21:27).

V Parable of the Two Sons: But now Jesus did not let these chief priests off the hook so easily. He told a little story to them. A man had two sons whom he asked to go and work in his vineyard (another figure representing Israel) on a certain day. The first said that he would not go. But afterward he was sorry and repented and went to the vineyard to work. The second son said that he would go, but he never did go. Now Jesus asked the priests and elders which son did the will of his father. They answered that, of course, the first. Then Jesus blasted them, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you." He pointed out that when John came in the way of righteousness preaching repentance that the publicans and harlots believed him and repented and were baptized, but the priests and elders did not believe him and repent. Clearly, the Lord equated the repentance of the publicans and harlots with the son who repented and eventually went to work in the vineyard. The chief priests corresponded to the son who made a profession with his mouth of doing the will of the father, but never carried out his profession.

VI Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen: Now Jesus warmed to the opportunity. He told another story which was an indictment of the history of the Jewish nation and a prophecy of the judgment which was soon to come. There was a certain householder

who planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. The owner then took a journey to another land for a long time. The owner had provided well for his vineyard. He planted a hedge around it and built a tower in it. When the time of grape harvest came he sent his servants to get the portion of the fruit that was his legal due. But the husbandmen would not pay the rent, but instead took the servants and beat them up and sent them away empty. The householder sent more servants and the wicked husbandmen (farmers) shamefully treated them. Some were stoned and some were beaten and some were even killed. Finally, the householder decided to send his own son. Surely they would respect him! But those husbandmen were so wicked that when they saw the son of the owner they conspired to kill him thinking that the vineyard would become their's. Jesus asked the chief priests what the householder would do to those husbandmen, and they answered before they realized what their answer meant. "He will miserably destroy those miserable men and will let out the vineyard to other husbandmen which shall render him the fruits in their season" (Matt.21:41).

VII He Spake of Them: The chief priests and Pharisees realized that Jesus had directed the parables at them. He bluntly explained that "therefore...the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof..." (Matt.21:43). The Pharisees understood well what Jesus meant. The householder was the Lord, the people of God were the vineyard, and the religious leaders were the husbandmen. God had sent His servants the prophets to Israel again and again throughout their history. The fruit of obedience and holiness was not to be found in Israel. The prophets were abused. On another occasion Jesus somewhat sarcastically remarked that it was impossible that a prophet should be killed anywhere else than in Jerusalem. Those to whom the responsibility was given to guide Israel in the paths of righteousness, made void the law of God and taught instead the vain traditions of men. They yielded no fruit of righteousness to God. Now the householder had sent his only son. Jesus, of course, is represented by that son. Here the parable takes a prophetic turn and Jesus foretells of their conspiracy and murder of the Son of God. How like the wicked husbandmens' conspiracy were the words of the Pharisees, "What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation." And the response

of Caiaphas the high priest, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:47-50).

The chief priests foretold their own doom, for the Lord, like the householder in the story, did "miserably destroy those miserable men and let out the vineyard;" that is, the Gospel to another nation, the true Israel of God which was born on the day of Pentecost.

VIII Great Responsibility: Great blessing brings great responsibility. We who have known the Gospel promises all of our lives have a great responsibility to bring forth the fruit of holiness and service for our Lord. If we do not bring forth this fruit despite the added help which we have through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we will put ourselves under the same condemnation as the scribes and Pharisees. Let us be sure, too, that we never just profess obedience without carrying it out, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." May our deeds support our words that it never need be said of us, as it was of a New England pastor of the last century, "What he does speaks so loud that I can't hear what he says. "Let us not just say, "Lord, Lord," but let us yield the fruit of holiness and service.

NOTES:

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE KINGDOM

Read: Matthew 22 & 23

Memory Work: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Gospel invitation is not to be taken lightly. If we do not come when the Holy Spirit draws us we may be forever shut out.*
2. *We are to honor and support our national government and not forget to give God that which is His due.*
3. *At least the spirits of those who die in Christ are with the Lord. He is the God of the living.*
4. *Our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.*

I A Parable of Warning: Once again the Lord illustrated an important truth about the kingdom of heaven by the use of a parable. The story was of a king who made a marriage feast for his son. The servants were sent with invitations for the guests. They would not come. Then the king sent other servants with the message that the great dinner feast was all prepared. But the bidden guests joked about it and went about their own business. They abused and even murdered some of the servants of the king. He was angry with those wicked murderers and sent out his army to destroy them and burn up their city. Then the king sent out his servants once more to gather guests from the hyways and byways until the feast was supplied with guests. Both good and bad were brought in and furnished with the proper wedding garments.

This parable was very obviously directed at the Jewish nation. God had prepared the Gospel feast and invited the Jewish people. They (in general) would not come. They persecuted the prophets of Old Testament times who invited them to the Gospel

feast. The parable looked into the future and warned of the destruction of the Jewish people and their capital city of Jerusalem. Within forty years of this parable God sent the Roman army under Titus to bring judgment on the Jews and their city. Josephus estimates that 900,000 Jews died in the siege of Jerusalem. In the end, despite the Roman general's instructions to spare the city and especially the temple, they were burned with fire exactly as foretold in this parable.

When the original guests did not respond to the invitation the king called others from the highways and byways. These others, bad and good, represent the Gentile converts. The Jewish people had the first opportunity to receive the Gospel and experience its blessed provision. When they thrust it away, the door opened to the Gentiles.

There are warnings for us in this teaching of Jesus. When the Holy Spirit draws our hearts and invites us to come to Jesus, we had better not delay or make excuse or make fun of it. The world mocks those who "see the light" or "hit the sawdust trail." Let us warn mockers that they may be shut out and never taste of that glorious supper. One of the guests that did respond, came without the wedding garment. He was cast out into outer darkness. The wedding garment is the righteousness of Jesus which is ours by faith alone. We must come to Christ on His terms. This means repentance, faith and testimony. Let us take warning also how we treat God's servants who bring the invitation. Since they are servants of the King of Kings they are worthy of honor.

II The Pharisees' Trap: Now the Pharisees came with a clever scheme to trick Jesus into saying something by which He would incriminate Himself. They asked Him if it were lawful for an Israelite to pay tribute to the Romans. The Lord was not caught off-guard. They expected Him to say that an Israelite should give to God. But Jesus wisely asked for a piece of tribute money and they obliged by bringing Him a penny. He perceived their wickedness and asked them why they tempted Him thus. "Whose is this image (picture) and inscription?" He asked. When they allowed that it was Caesar's, He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." Silenced and amazed, the hypocritical Pharisees turned and went their way. So we may conclude that it is right and proper for the believer to pay taxes to the government even if it is hostile to Christianity.

III The Sadducees' Joke: These aristocratic religious leaders were the modernists of their day. They explained away the miracles of the Old Testament and believed in no resurrection or spirits or angelic beings. They came with a ridiculous story that a certain man died childless. According to the law of Moses, the deceased man's brother was obliged to take his brother's widow and raise an offspring to carry on the family name. Their silly hypothetical story was that six brothers all married the widow. (She must have been some cook!) Last of all she died also. The great question of the Sadducees was, whose wife of the seven would she be in the resurrection. They were trying to ridicule the resurrection. But Jesus quickly silenced their mocking. First He explained that in the resurrection marriage will be superseded by a higher relationship. Then He upbraided the Sadducees for knowing neither the scriptures nor the power of God. He reminded them that God had revealed in their sacred writings that He was the God of Abraham and of Isaac and Jacob. Now Jesus declared that God was not the God of the dead. Moses and Elijah had appeared on the mount of transfiguration. Not only did Jesus silence the haughty Sadducees, but He taught us positively that the righteous, believing dead are with the Lord. Herbert Armstrong and his son Garner Ted, and the Seventh Day Adventists deny this truth and use other scriptures which are not on the subject of life beyond the grave. "To depart and be with the Lord is better" Paul affirmed. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Thank God for the comfort and hope of the scriptures. The spirit at least of those who die in the Lord rises into the Presence of our Lord the first begotten from the dead. At the resurrection day the glorified bodies will clothe the spirits once again.

IV The Wisdom of Jesus: The Pharisees were happy to witness the embarrassment of the Sadducees. One of them asked the Lord, again attempting to entangle Him, which commandment was the most important in the law. Jesus was again alert for the trap and simply quoted the two summary commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This, Jesus declared was the first and great commandment, but the second, He affirmed, is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." His simple wisdom confounded the subtil Pharisees.

Finally, Jesus asked them a question and stumped them at once. "What think ye of Christ," he asked, "Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," the Pharisees affirmed. Jesus then quoted Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool." He asked the Pharisees if Christ was David's son why David in this Psalm called Him Lord. The poor Pharisees were stumped. Jesus had answered all of their questions but they could not answer His question to them. From that time on they ceased asking Him questions.

V Woe Unto You Hypocrites: The hostility of the scribes and Pharisees had increased until they determined to do away with Him. Jesus had attacked the teachings of the Pharisees from the beginning. The main impact of the Sermon on the Mount, was aimed at correcting the shallow and hollow teachings of the Pharisees. The greatest fault of the Pharisees was their hypocrisy. This acting the part of righteous believers when the life is inconsistent is obnoxious to God and man.

The twenty-third chapter of Matthew contains an extensive condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees. The Sermon on the Mount describes the blessed character of believers with the nine "blesseds" of the beatitudes. Here eight "woes" are pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy. They did not practice what they preached (vs.3). They demanded of others what they would not do themselves (vs.4). What good they did was all to be seen of men (vs.5). They loved the honor and praise of men (vss.6-7).

We may learn much from this denunciation. If we avoid similar attitudes and actions we will come a long way toward pleasing God.

The first woe of the Lord is pronounced because they hindered seekers from entering the kingdom of heaven. The converts they made (for Judaism) became worse than themselves. Their covetousness was denounced by the Lord (vss.16-22). Their wrong priorities and concern for outward appearances revealed their utter hypocrisy. The Lord's denunciation reached a climax when He said, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (vss.32-33). Their fathers had slain the righteous prophets and they would soon shed the blood of the Son of God. All the blood of the prophets was to be required of that generation. How Jesus had desired to draw the people of Jerusalem into fellowship with the Father and with Himself, but they would not. Now their house (temple) was left unto them desolate (no Presence of God) and soon the final destruction

would come. They did not recognize the day of their visitation. Within forty years the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost. The "holy city" that had slain its prophets and shed the blood of the righteous was burned with fire and the nation swept away.

Let us recognize the day of our opportunity. "Today, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart." Tomorrow may be too late. God is merciful, but also just, and if we refuse His invitation we may awaken to our mistake too late. Let us not play games with our eternal destiny.

NOTES:

THE MOUNT OLIVET DISCOURSE-I

Read: Matthew 24

Memory Work: Review Matthew 5:13-16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army in AD 70 fulfilled the prophecies of judgment and vengeance on Israel for their long history of rebellion against the Lord.*
2. *The Lord mercifully warned His disciples to look for an unmistakable sign of the inevitable doom of Jerusalem, at which they were to flee from the city without delay.*
3. *The main thing which the Lord taught concerning the end of the world, was that there would be no signs of its approach. This necessitates a constant readiness and alertness.*
4. *The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom must reach all nations before the end of the age and the return of the Lord.*

I The Disciples' Question: After denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Jesus left the temple and instead of returning to Bethany again He went to the Mount of Olives. As they left the area of the temple, the disciples admired the great buildings of the temple. Some of these hewn stones were thirty feet long. But Jesus was not impressed by the grandeur of the buildings. He remarked that the entire structure would be destroyed so that one stone would not be left upon another. This greatly astonished the disciples. Their ideas regarding the kingdom of God were still based upon the assumption that it was to be a natural earthly kingdom. When they arrived at Olivet, four of the disciples (see Mark 13:3) came to Jesus to ask Him privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world" (Matt. 24:2)? In His denunciation of the Pharisees Jesus had warned

of vengeance on this generation (ch.23:36). He also had foretold of His second coming when He declared, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (23:39). The disciples thought the two events would be simultaneous; that is, the judgment of Jerusalem and the coming of the Lord at the end of the world.

II Two Distinct and Separate Events: Jesus' answer to the question of Peter, James, John and Andrew makes up the longest single discourse by Jesus recorded in the Gospels. He was concerned first of all to clear up their mistaken idea that the destruction of Jerusalem and the return of Christ and the end of the world were to happen at the same time. He began by warning them not to be deceived by reports that Christ was here or there in some secret place. Even though they would hear of wars, the end (of the world) was not yet (ch.24:6). False Christs would arise in the days of the siege of Jerusalem. The general population and the religious leaders would be expecting miraculous deliverance. Reports would circulate that the Messiah was here or there. Jesus warned that they might even do wonders to deceive the elect believers. They were not to believe any of these reports. Jerusalem was appointed to destruction. The Lord would not reappear to deliver the wicked "holy city" at that time. When the Lord did return, he promised, it would not be a secret event, but as obvious as lightning that is seen from east to west. So first, the Lord cleared up the disciples' mistaken idea: that the destruction of Jerusalem, when not one stone would be left upon another, and the end of the world, when the Lord would come "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," would occur at the same time.

III Judgment of Israel and Jerusalem: Jesus was very specific in warning the disciples how to escape the devastating overthrow of Jerusalem. He told them to look for a clear sign that would indicate the destruction of the city was imminent. He told them that when they saw the "abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place" (land), they should flee at once to the mountains (vs.16). They were not to delay or pack and turn back for any reason. The greatest affliction and tribulation in the history of the world would come upon Israel at that time. The "great tribulation" had to do with Israel, and especially with the city of Jerusalem where the hypocritical religious leaders were centered.

This tribulation was to be "such as was not since the beginning of the world,---nor ever shall be," This was fulfilled not in the magnitude of the catastrophe, but in its terrible intensity. The unmistakable sign was that of the Roman army. That is the clear meaning of "the abomination of desolation." When the believers saw the Roman army in the vicinity of the holy "place" they were to flee at once. The holy place does not refer to the holy of holies in the temple, but simply to the city of Jerusalem or the land of Israel.

Early church history and traditions inform us that the followers of Christ did flee from Jerusalem at the approach of the Roman army. Warned again through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as well as this word recorded by the Gospel writers, the Christians escaped that wrath to the uttermost which came upon the Jews and their city.

The Roman general, Titus, led his army against Jerusalem. Flavius Josephus, a great Jewish historian who lived at the time and who defected to the Romans in the midst of the siege, has recorded the unbelievable horror of the siege. Despite the obvious threat from the Roman army just outside the wall, the Jews within the city were quarreling amongst themselves. The city was full of violence. Three factions vied for political control of the city, and especially the temple and fortress tower. The city had been crowded with pilgrims who had come for a feast when the Romans shut them in, blockading all the gates. Of course, food soon was scarce. Famine conditions prevailed. Epidemics of plague broke out. Thousands died. There was no place to bury the bodies. At first empty houses were filled with corpses and nailed shut. Then after a devastating plague, 100,000 bodies were thrown over the wall in one night. Babies and young children were eaten. Yet all the while the rival political factions, not possessing the least grain of common sense to unite against the common foe at their gates, were fighting and killing each other within the doomed city.

Titus, the Roman general, gave instructions to his men to spare the city and especially the remarkable temple. After two years the Romans finally breached the wall. Despite the general's instructions the city and the temple were set on fire. The soldiers stripped the gold from the temple and in their greedy search for more gold threw down every stone of the temple, fulfilling exactly Jesus' prophecy! It has been estimated that 900,000 died in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and 100,000 were taken captives and sold as slaves all over the Roman empire. But the followers of Jesus, warned by His teach-

ing here in the Olivet discourse, and also by the Holy Spirit, were not harmed.

IV The Second Coming and the End of the World: In answer to the disciples' question the Lord told them exactly what sign to look for in order to beware of and escape the overthrow of the city of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. Concerning the "signs of thy coming and the end of the world," Jesus had a very different instruction for His followers. The single most important aspect of the Lord's second coming is that there is to be no sign. We are always to expect it and be ready for it. Jesus told the disciples that even He did not know the day nor the hour of the great event. The end would come unexpectedly. "In such an hour as ye think not," Jesus taught. Therefore we are always to be expectant and always ready. The duty of believers in these days is to preach the gospel of the kingdom fully to all nations. Suddenly, without sensational signs the Lord will return. It will be a day of judgment for the wicked. They will be taken away. Just as the flood came suddenly upon the world in the days of Noah, without signs and disruption of everyday life, so shall the end of the world be: totally unexpected by the world. We then, must expect the Lord at any time and watch and be ready.

V Two Illustrations: The illustration of the fig tree underlines the teaching of Jesus concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (see vss.32-35). As surely as the new buds and leaves on the fig tree are the sign of approaching summer, so the appearance of the Roman army in the holy land was the sign of the judgment of Jerusalem.

The illustration of the servant given charge of the household while his lord was journeying, emphasizes the necessity of expecting our Lord at any moment. Let us watch and be ready. Our readiness consists in overcoming sin and in faithfully serving our Lord and one another. He may come today or He may not come for several years, or He may not come for many years. We must be prepared for His sudden appearance whether it be today or after long delay. Our job is to overcome evil and preach the gospel of the kingdom fully in all nations of the earth.

THE MOUNT OLIVET DISCOURSE-II

Read: Matthew 25

Memory Work: Matthew 5:1-16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord's teaching makes it very clear what we must do to be ready for His second coming and the end of the world.*
2. *It is of primary importance that we are filled constantly with the Holy Spirit.*
3. *We also must be occupied with obedient service for our Lord to be counted worthy of His reward in the heavenly kingdom.*
4. *Our treatment of brothers and sisters in Christ results in reward or punishment in the heavenly kingdom. What we do toward fellow believers is the same as doing it to Christ.*

I The Parable of the Ten Virgins: The purpose of this parable is to teach us how to prepare for the Lord's second coming. This first parable deals with our inner life, while the second parable (of the talents) deals with our outward service. The first word of this teaching is "then." So this parable described the future. The Lord is speaking only about believers. The ten virgins represent ten believers. They are all true Christians. They have much in common. All are called virgins, all were expecting the bridegroom, all had lamps, and all were sleeping as a result of the long delayed arrival of the bridegroom. The one difference which distinguished the wise from the foolish virgins was their care to obtain and have available extra oil. Throughout the scriptures, oil is used as a type of the Holy Spirit of God. These wise virgins perceived the possibility of long delay in the bridegroom's coming and they prepared for that possibility. We are most often taught to expect the Lord's return soon, and so we should; but the possibility exists that the return of Jesus may be delayed longer than we anticipate.

For this possibility we must be prepared. The preparation needed is the constant fullness of the Holy Spirit. The wise virgins took extra oil in their vessels. We need an extra portion of the Holy Spirit. The initial baptism, as wonderful as it is may not be enough to carry us through the dark days before the Lord's return. We need the one baptism, and many fillings, and the constant anointing of the Holy Spirit. The parable is a warning against neglecting to seek and receive the fullness of the Spirit at once. Note that when the cry was made that the bridegroom was arriving and the virgins all awoke and trimmed their lamps, that only then did the foolish realize that their lamps were going out. After attempting to get oil from the wise virgins they hastened to go and buy some for themselves. They did obtain the oil they sought, but alas, when they returned and sought entrance to the marriage, the door had been shut and the Lord would not open unto them. He rejected their plea and said, "I know you not." What a horrible awakening; to be shut out despite being classified as a virgin and despite having even obtained the oil. Surely this parable teaches the tremendous importance of being filled with the fullness of the Spirit continually. The initial baptism must be augmented by many renewed fillings and by diligent seeking until we live under the constant anointing of the Holy Spirit. Dark days are coming. Let us use the present opportunity to claim the Lord's promise concerning the Holy Spirit that "every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." We need the power of the Spirit for our inner life. "We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit dwell in you" (Rom.8:9). This extra oil, the abundant supply of the power of the Holy Spirit, enables us to overcome the weakness of the flesh and live in holiness before the Lord. This is exceedingly important for without this inward holiness even our Spirit-inspired work for Christ will bring us no reward (see Matt.7:21-23). Do not be deceived by the compromising and popular doctrine of the dual nature, which concludes that we cannot overcome our weaknesses and live in holiness before God because we are still in the body of flesh. God's promise of the power of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for one with the weakest of natures to become strong in the Lord. Where you are weak, the power of the Spirit will make you strong.

II The Talents: This parable is possibly not another separate parable at all, but a continuation of the parable of the ten

virgins. The words "the kingdom of heaven is" (see vs.14) are not in the original text, but supplied by the translators. With these words omitted the idea is clear that this is a further explanation of the truth dealt with formerly. The example of the ten virgins is like the head side of the same coin. Both stories teach us how to be prepared for the coming of the Lord. The story of the ten virgins teaches us the importance of inward readiness. The illustration of the talents makes clear that we must fulfill outward works of service for our Lord.

The talents were distributed, five to one servant, two to another, and one talent to a third. The lord of those servants then took his journey and after a long time returned and reckoned with those servants. The first two had doubled their quantities and received the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (vss.21,23). The third had buried his talent fearing to risk its use. He was condemned for his sloth. The talent was taken from him and given to he who had ten. The slothful and unprofitable servant was bound and cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (vs.30).

The message again is clear. If we would be ready for the Lord's return we must be profitably employed in His service. We must "occupy till He come," and be "about our Father's business."

III The Sheep and the Goats: The great judgment scene pictured here at the close of the Mount Olivet discourse has many interpretations. The most important lesson of this illustration is covered well by the popular reminder;

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past;

Only what's done for Christ will last."

The king is identified as the Son of Man, and "all judgment is committed unto the Son" (John 5:22). It appears that the judgment is not of nations as such, but of individuals. The separation is based upon the conduct, toward Christ or His brethren. Some scholars teach that this reference is to His brethren according to the flesh, i.e., the Jews, but He Himself identifies His "brethren" in Matthew 12:48-50, as anyone who does the will of the Father in heaven. In a similar passage in Mark 9:41 the reward is promised for service rendered to one because they belong to Christ. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me" (see John 13:33). This shows the unity between Christ and His

church. We are members of His body. What we do or what we fail to do toward a fellow believer is the same as doing it or failing to do it to Christ Himself. When Saul was attacking Christians before his conversion, the Lord asked him on the Damascus road, "Why persecutest thou ME?"

The permanent nature of the destiny of each class is definitely stated by our Lord. "Everlasting" and "eternal" are the same Greek word. The everlasting punishment was not prepared for men, but "for the devil and his angels," for God is "not willing that any should perish," but if men will not take the way of life prepared for them, there is only one destiny awaiting them.

Too much attention is given to the various mechanics of the second coming of our Lord. The millenium, the rapture, the great tribulation are the subject of too many sermons, while the truly important subjects of inward preparedness and faithful performance of works of obedience to our Lord are neglected. Remember, complete and even orthodox knowledge about how the Lord will return, does not make you ready for that return, but inward holiness and faithful service will keep you ready even though you might not know exactly how the Lord will return. Go now and get ready!

NOTES:

THE KING IS CRUCIFIED

Read: Matthew 26 & 27

Memory Work: Review Matthew 5:1-16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Lord highly esteems our sincere acts of devotion and adoration.*
2. *The Lord's supper replaces the Jewish passover supper, "till He come."*
3. *We need one another, especially in time of trial and affliction.*
4. *Jesus could have instantly summoned twelve legions of angels, but then the scripture prophecies and types would not have been fulfilled.*
5. *Before the Jewish Sanhedrin, Jesus was charged with blasphemy; but before Pilate the charges were changed to sedition and revolution.*
6. *Self confidence will bring bitter disappointment.*

I The Last Pound of Devotion: While the chief priests and scribes with the elders of the Jewish people conspired together with Caiaphas, the high priest, to put Jesus to death; He was in the house of Simon, the leper in Bethany. Martha served a feast and Lazarus whom Jesus had recently raised from the dead was also present. But it was the other sister, Mary, who at this time performed such an act of devotion as to bring everlasting honor upon herself. We are indebted to John for the names of the participants in this scene (John 12:2-3). Matthew and Mark omit the names.

While Jesus still reclined at the table in the house of Simon, Mary came and anointed Jesus' head and feet with a very costly ointment. She wiped Jesus' feet with the hair of her head. This act of devotion filled the house with the sweet odor of the expensive perfume. The disciples thought it a waste

of money. Again, it is John who tells us that it was Judas the betrayer, who voiced the protest that this ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. It is noted by John that Judas was motivated not by love for the poor, but by love of money. He is called a thief in this passage (see John 12:6).

Jesus had a different attitude concerning this act of devotion. He knew well that His betrayal and death were only several days away. He remarked that the inspired anointing was for His approaching death and burial. If anyone understood that Jesus was to die for the atonement of man's sin, it was Mary, who sat so often at Jesus' feet and listened to His words. "The poor ye have always with you," Jesus explained, "but me ye have not always." Then Jesus promised that wherever in all the world the Gospel was preached, this act of devotion should be related as a memorial to her love and devotion. How do we show our love and devotion to the Lord who has given His life for us? Let us pour out our richest treasures and sacrifices to the One who so greatly loved us.

II The Lord's Supper: After the incident of the anointing of Jesus by Mary, Judas went to the chief priests of the Jews and asked what they would give him if he would deliver Jesus into their hands. They finally agreed to pay the traitor thirty pieces of silver. This was not an accident. Zechariah had prophesied that the price of betrayal would be thirty pieces of silver (see Zech.11:12-13).

Meanwhile, Jesus instructed several of His disciples to secure and prepare a place where they could eat the passover together. This was the last true passover supper. The type represented by the passover was fulfilled in the death of Christ and so that which had always been looking forward to fulfillment now was accomplished. This supper was not only the last passover supper, but the first Lord's supper. Since that first holy communion supper we look back and remember all that was accomplished for us by Jesus as He laid down His life for us. It is as if the cross is the focus of all history. The Patriarchs and the children of Israel looked forward during Old Testament times to the coming of the Messiah and Savior. We of the Gospel age look back at the cross and claim the fulness of the redemption wrought there for us by Jesus our Lord. Unfortunately, the Jewish people (in general) are still searching the horizons of the future for their deliverer while all the time the promised one is behind them. He finished the work on Calvary.

The passover Lamb was eaten and its blood sprinkled on

the posts of the door of each house for protection. The Israelites were forbidden to drink the blood of their sacrifices, but we are commanded to eat the flesh and drink the blood of our perfect sacrifice, the Son of God. Thus, through the Holy Communion, the blood of the Son of God reaches into our very inward parts. The disciples were commanded to repeat this supper often in remembrance of the Lord till He should return again. The Lord said further, that He, Himself would not partake of the fruit of the vine until He partook of it anew with His followers in the Kingdom. The Holy Communion is the precious sacrament ordained by the Lord Himself which brings to the believers the very life of the Son of God. This is the New Covenant.

III Gethsemane: Much took place at the last supper which Matthew does not record. There, the Lord washed the disciples' feet. There, the marvellous teachings of John 14, 15, & 16 were given. But when they had sung a closing hymn they went out toward the Mount of Olives once again. On the way Jesus began to warn the disciples of the danger this night would bring. He said that they would be offended because of Him and scattered when He was smitten. Peter in great, and probably sincere self-confidence, assured the Lord that though the others might be offended because of Jesus, yet he would never be so. The Lord carefully foretold that before the rooster would crow twice to signal the morning light, Peter would deny the Lord three times. Peter had to have the last word and assured the Lord that on pain of death he would not deny Jesus.

As they approached the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus left most of the disciples to rest, but desired Peter, James and John to come with Him into Gethsemane for prayer. His spirit was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." He desired the three disciples to watch and pray with Him. We need one another in times of trial. Perhaps the sins and the sicknesses of all the world came upon Jesus here in this dark hour. Some believe that Satan attempted to kill the Lord here before the cross with sorrow of heart and so mar the great plan of redemption. Jesus cried to His Father. Perhaps it was from this attack of Satan that Jesus asked to be delivered. Or perhaps it was the human side of our Savior that shrank from the cross which He knew He must endure. A great battle was fought there. The disciples were of little help. They quickly fell asleep. Like many disciples since that time, their spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. This need not, this must not, be the case with the

New Covenant disciple. Where we are weak, His Spirit makes us strong.

Three times the Lord agonized in prayer to the Father. His perspiration became mixed with blood. We learn elsewhere that at this time an angel came and ministered to Him. But alas, when Jesus awoke the three sleepers for the third time, the mob was upon them. Judas led the way for the treacherous crowd. He approached the Lord with "Hail, Master," and kissed Him as a sign to those with him that this was He. The mob soon surrounded Jesus, and one of the disciples drew a sword and cut off the ear of a servant of the High Priest. Jesus stopped this well intentioned violence. He explained that He could at once summon twelve legions of angels to deliver Him. He would not do this, however, because the scriptures must be fulfilled. None of these things happened by chance. Though occurring in a natural way, all was Divinely ordained and many of the smallest details of these hours were minutely prophesied in the Old Testament.

IV Before Caiaphas: Jesus was bound and led away to appear before Caiaphas in the dead of night. The entire Sanhedrin was likely not present. Those with sympathies toward tolerance of Jesus were not present. No voice was raised in His defence. The charge against Him was that of blasphemy. They accused Him of making Himself God by claiming to be the son of God. They had many witnesses prepared but their testimony, even in that kangaroo court, did not agree. Finally, the High Priest adjured Jesus by the living God to answer directly whether He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Immediately, when Jesus spoke and declared: "Thou hast said" (the truth), the High Priest in a great show, tore his garments and concluded that no further witness was necessary. "What think ye?" he asked. "He is worthy of death," the puppet court concurred. They had no authority to execute the Lord and so they purposed to take Him before Pilate and there accuse Him of a totally different crime.

During this midnight trial Peter, who had followed the Lord "afar off" entered the courtyard and warmed himself at the fire. A maiden observed that he was one of Jesus' followers, but he denied it. Another questioned whether he was not a disciple and finally, one noted that his Galilaean speech gave Him away. He began to curse and to swear, denying that he even knew the man. Not long before Peter had declared to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." Now

he denies that he even knows "the man." Such is the weakness of human character. Were it not for the grace of God and the marvellous change wrought by the indwelling Christ, what a weak and miserable crowd the followers of Christ would be. Thank God, Pentecost changed Peter and it changes us. Self confidence will surely bring us to grief, but faith in the power of the Spirit will make us more than conquerors.

The rooster gave his cry once and twice, and Peter remembered, alas, too late. He went out and wept bitterly. Yet it was not too late, for the patient Lord had prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail, and the day came when this man, Simon the reed, blown this way and that by the wind of influences around him, became really and truly Peter the rock, strong and faithful. "Take us, oh Lord, and change us until we are altogether what you have called us to be."

NOTES:

THE KING TRIUMPHS OVER DEATH

Read: Matthew 27 & 28

Memory Work: Matthew 5:1-16

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It is a most horrible offence to betray our Lord after tasting of the glories of His kingdom.*
2. *Each individual must determine personally what they will do in response to Jesus Christ and what He has done on Calvary for them.*
3. *Our Lord endured the cross and despised the shame because He foresaw the glory of the redemption and reconciliation of humanity to the Father.*
4. *His death opened the way for all humanity to have direct access to God the Father.*
5. *The resurrection of Jesus is our assurance that His promise is true: "Lo I am with you always."*

I The Betrayer of Innocent Blood: After concluding that for blasphemy Jesus was worthy of the death sentence, the Jewish Sanhedrin considered how they might execute the sentence. It was necessary for the Roman governor to approve such a sentence. For matters of their religion, Pilate never would have sentenced Jesus to death. Therefore, the Jews conspired to change the charges against Jesus to conspiracy to overthrow the Roman government. They accused Him of setting Himself up as the King of the Jews.

Judas had witnessed the miraculous escape of the Lord from the hands of the Jews on several occasions before. Perhaps he thought that once again Jesus would escape from their evil designs, while he would be thirty pieces of silver richer for the experience. But now, when he saw that Jesus was allowing the Jews to bring Him before Pilate, Judas awoke to the terrible blunder he had made. He sought out the priests and attempted to return the blood money. He recognized that he had

sinned in that he had betrayed innocent blood. The Jews would not receive the tainted money and so Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and in despair went out and hanged himself. The priests fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (11:13) when they took the silver and used it to purchase a burying place for the poor. The potter's field was appropriately named, "The field of blood." Judas' failure to recognize and deal with the love of money and the covetousness and dishonesty which were his besetting sins, caused him to become so ensnared in that web of sin that he became the most infamous traitor in all of history. Let us recognize the necessity of our dealing with our shortcomings and besetting sins before they cause us the grief of a ruined life and eternal loss. If we do not get the victory in our early life the bondages become more fixed and difficult to break.

II Pilate Abdicates His Responsibility: When Pilate asked Jesus directly if He was the King of the Jews, Jesus answered affirmatively, "Thou sayest" (truth). But when the Jews accused Him of various offences before Pilate, Jesus did not argue or defend Himself until the governor marvelled greatly. Knowing that for envy the Jews were accusing Jesus, Pilate attempted to thwart their evil intentions by releasing Jesus according to the yearly holy day custom. He offered them the choice of Jesus or Barabbas. He probably reasoned that the Jews would not have the gall to ask for Barabbas who was clearly guilty of the very charges which they brought against Jesus. He had really led a revolt in which murder was committed. What a choice was put before the Jews. Jesus, who had healed their sick and taught them the divine word of God, or Barabbas, a rebel leader and murderer. Yet the blind Jewish leaders chose Barabbas. The unregenerate evil heart will choose the world and the flesh and the devil every time. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

The wife of Pilate interrupted the proceedings to confer with her perplexed husband. She confided to him that she had "suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." She warned her poor husband to have nothing to do with the condemnation of "that just man."

When Pilate realized his dilemma he asked the crowd what they thought should be done to Jesus. They cried out, "Let him be crucified." The astonished governor feebly protested, "Why, what evil hath he done?" But when they cried out even more vehemently that Jesus be crucified Pilate feared for his position.

He did not want to be called to answer for a riot and upheaval in his domain. Unwilling to make the righteous and proper decision, Pilate called for a basin and water and before the assembled mob he washed his hands, saying that he was "innocent of the blood of this just person." No amount of water could wash away his guilt. But the guilt of the Jewish leaders was greater still, for they blatantly accepted the guilt. "His blood be on us, and on our children" they cried. Bad enough to accept responsibility for such a crime themselves, but to saddle their offspring also with the blame was unspeakably cruel. So Pilate, willing to sacrifice the life of one just and righteous man for the sake of peace and calm in the territory of his jurisdiction, allowed the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God to be sentenced to death by crucifixion.

In a sense it was Pilate who was on trial before Jesus. What he did or did not do affects Pilate's destiny throughout all eternity. What we do in response to the redemption wrought by Jesus will determine our eternal destiny also.

"What will you do with Jesus?"

Neutral you cannot be!

Some day your heart will be asking;

What will He do with me?"

Some try to postpone their decision for or against faith in Jesus the Savior, but now is the accepted time, tomorrow may be too late. Don't follow the weak-kneed example of Pilate. Decide now to accept and live for Christ no matter what it costs.

III They Watched Him There: The soldiers of Pilate mocked and abused Jesus. Though not mentioned by Matthew, Herod and his men of war also set the Lord at naught. They made a crown for the King, of crude thorns. They stripped and beat Him and then draped a mock-purple royal robe around Him and bowed in mock adoration before the meekly enduring Son of God. They spit upon Him and smote Him on the head. How will those feel who spit upon Him when they stand before the same One on the day of judgment?

The Lord was led to Calvary, the "place of a skull," where He was nailed to the cross. He refused the pain deadening vinegar and gall offered to Him. The sign designating His crime was nailed above His head on the cross. In three languages it read: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." As He was lifted up on the terrible cross the soldiers unknowingly fulfilled the scriptures by casting lots for His cloak and dividing His clothing between them. Some spectators railed on Him. Others with

hardened hearts sat down and watched Him suffer. Once, in writhing agony, He cried out quoting from the Psalms: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Darkness covered the scene until Jesus finally cried out, "It is finished." This was not the last gasp of an expiring victim, but the triumphant shout of the conqueror! When He had commended His Spirit to the Father, His head dropped to His chest as He "gave up the ghost."

At once, in the temple a startling and significant thing occurred. The thick curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the outer portion of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews explains the significance of this occurrence. The death of the perfect Son of God so perfectly atoned for all of man's sin that now a new and living way was opened into the presence of God within the veil. Praise God! that way is open today for direct access to God for every believer. Not only was the curtain rent, but also the rocks, by means of an earthquake. Matthew reveals that the bodies of departed saints arose and appeared to many in the holy city after His resurrection.

IV As Sure As Ye Can: The centurion in charge of the execution after seeing how Jesus died, witnessed, "Truly this was the Son of God." The women who loved Jesus so, and ministered to His needs, were there till the end. They saw the secret believer, Joseph of Arimathaea, come forward and ask for custody of the body of Jesus. Tenderly wrapped in linen, the precious body was laid in the new tomb which Joseph had hewn in solid rock in his garden. They watched with deep sorrow and interest as Joseph rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre.

The chief priests and Pharisees, still not satisfied, approached Pilate once again and asked that the sepulchre be made secure lest the disciples steal the body and claim that He rose from the dead. They remembered that He had said that He would rise the third day. Pilate granted their request. He ordered the seal of Rome to be affixed to the stone and a watch to be set at the tomb. Caustically he remarked to the priests, "Make it as sure as ye can."

V Lo He Is The Mighty Conqueror: How weak and futile the seal and guard appear against the omnipotence of Almighty God. Death could not keep Jesus its prisoner. Corruption could not touch that holy body. On the first day of the week, at the

rising of the sun an angel of the Lord descended and rolled away the stone. "Then He arose, over death He had conquered!" Rome's soldiers shook from fright and became as dead men. To Mary first, and then to the other women, Jesus appeared in resurrection glory. By many infallible proofs Jesus showed Himself to be alive, and indeed clothed with a body of flesh and blood. At the appointed place in Galilee He commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel and teach His commandments in all the world, promising them; "and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." That promise is still good today. Our glorified, resurrected Lord, with all power in heaven and in earth, is with us here and now, and He is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him. "Lo, He is the mighty conqueror." The sting of death is gone. The grave is robbed of its triumph. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

NOTES: