

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson One

Introduction

Text: Matthew 13:10-17

I. Parables Defined

- A. The word “parable” is a transliteration of the Greek word *parabole*. (παραβολε)
- B. The word literally means, “to place beside, to throw alongside.”
- C. A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
- D. A parable is not a...
 - 1. **SIMILE** – *an explicit comparison, usually employing the word “like” or “as”* (cf. Matt. 10:16; 12:40; 23:27).
 - 2. **METAPHOR** – *an implied comparison* (cf. Matt. 5:13; Mark 8:15; Luke 13:32).
 - 3. **FABLE** – *a comparison related in the form of a story that is unrealistic (i.e. with talking animals, trees, etc.)* (cf. Judges 9:7-15; 2 Kings 14:9).
 - 4. **ALLEGORY** – *a comparison related in the form of a story in which every detail has a comparative meaning* (cf. John 8:12; Gal. 4:21-31).

II. Parables Delivered

- A. Old Testament Parables
 - 1. There are numerous examples.
 - 2. The most well known is Nathan’s parable to David (2 Samuel 12).
- B. New Testament Parables
 - 1. Jesus was the master teacher.
 - 2. Of His recorded teaching, 1/3 was in the form of parables.

III. Parables Defended

- A. The function of parables was to reveal. (Matthew 13:11, 16-17)
- B. The function of parables was to conceal. (Matthew 13:13-15; cf. 21:45)
- C. The function of parables was to fulfill. (Matthew 13:34-35)
- D. The function of parables was to make real.

IV. Parables Displayed

- A. To understand the intended and true meaning of a parable, several things must be done.
 - 1. Context - *The parable must be considered within its context.*
 - 2. Central - *The central meaning of the parable must be considered.*
 - 3. Compare - *The teaching of the parable must be compared with the teaching of Scripture.*
- B. A parable has only one central point or teaching.

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Lesson Two

The Parable of the Sower

Texts: Matthew 13:1-23

Mark 4:1-20

Luke 8:4-15

I. The Parable

- A. Seeing someone sow seed in this manner would be a common event for Jesus' audience.
- B. Seeing the results of the sowing on different types of soil would be common also.
- C. Seeing an abundant harvest from such sowing would be familiar to them.

II. The Purpose

- A. The purpose of this parable is to teach about the kinds of hearts men may possess.
 - 1. The Wayside Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is unprepared – *He does not understand the word.*
 - b. He is listening but not grasping it (cf. Mt. 13:14-15).
 - c. Thus, the devil is able to instantly take away the impact of the word.
 - i. Those who hear with prejudice.
 - ii. Those who hear with worldliness.
 - iii. Those who hear with indifference.
 - iv. Those who hear with hypocrisy.
 - 2. The Stony Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is prepared only slightly – *He hears with joy.*
 - b. He listens but does not develop strong convictions.
 - c. Thus, temptation and persecution wither the impact of the word.
 - i. Those who hear with emotionalism.
 - ii. Those who hear with blindness (cf. Luke 14:25-33).
 - iii. Those who hear with materialism (cf. John 6:26, 60, 66).
 - 3. The Thorny Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is prepared and fertile – *He allows growth.*
 - b. He listens but does not cultivate his heart by weeding out all else.
 - c. Thus, worldly cares choke out the fruitful impact of the word.
 - i. Those who hear with worry (cf. Luke 10:38-42).
 - ii. Those who hear with doubt (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9).
 - iii. Those who hear with disloyalty.
 - 4. The Good Ground Hearer
 - a. His heart is prepared, fertile and cultivated.
 - b. He hears, obeys, grows and matures.
 - c. Thus, he brings forth much fruit in his life and in the lives of others.
- B. This parable would then serve two functions.
 - 1. It would explain why so many were trying to undermine Jesus' teaching.
 - 2. It would encourage His hearers to prepare their hearts for His teaching.

III. The Peripherals

- A. The Sower (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6; Ecc. 11:4-6; John 4:35-38; 2 Tim. 2:24-26)
- B. The Seed (cf. John 6:63; 1 Pet. 1:23; Gal. 6:7; Acts 11:26)

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Lesson Three

The Parable of the Tares

Texts: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

I. The Parable

- A. Jesus' audience understood the sowing of seed in the field.
- B. Without doubt they also understood the damage that could be done by such an enemy as described by Jesus.
- C. They also realized the difficulty in separating wheat from weeds (e.g., darnel).

II. The Purpose

- A. To teach about the Kingdom of Heaven
 - 1. The Sower
 - a. The kingdom of heaven is compared to the sower.
 - b. The sower is Jesus.
 - c. Today, Jesus sows the seed through His faithful disciples (Jn. 15:1-2).
 - 2. The Seed
 - a. The good seed are the children of the kingdom.
 - b. These are they who have received and obeyed the Word of God (13:19).
 - c. The bad seed (tares) are the children of the wicked one.
 - d. These are they who have followed his word (John 8:43-44).
 - 3. The Supplanter
 - a. The enemy is the Devil.
 - b. The enemy is also a sower.
 - c. The enemy also has seed.
 - d. The Devil seeks to counterfeit every good thing of God (2 Cor 11:13-15).
 - 4. The Setting
 - a. The field is the world!
 - b. In this parable, the kingdom is likened to the Sower, not the church.
 - 5. The Separation
 - a. It will occur at the end of the world.
 - b. It will be carried out by the angels (2 Thes. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:31).
 - c. The sinners will be gathered and cast into the fire.
 - d. The saints will shine in the presence of the Father (Rev 21:27; Dan 12:3).
- B. To motivate faithfulness to the King of the Kingdom

III. The Peripherals

- A. The Devil is the source of counterfeit religion.
- B. All people are amenable to the Law of Christ.
- C. Are you sowing the seed of the kingdom?

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Lesson Four

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Texts: Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19

I. The Parable

- A. The smallness of a mustard seed was well known by Jesus' audience.
 - 1. Today, our mustard plants are small, annual herbs.
 - 2. The plant in Palestine of Jesus' day was quite different.
 - 3. Not only did it create shade, but also men could climb the larger trees.
- B. "The least of all seeds" is not scientific fact, but an illustration ("big as a barn").
 - 1. The mustard was a symbol of smallness (cf. Luke 17:6).
 - 2. Though a bird could hold it in its mouth, it would become a haven for the birds.

II. The Purpose

- A. In contrast with the previous parables, this one is quite encouraging.
- B. The kingdom of heaven begins in smallness.
 - 1. One man – Jesus – *crucified and buried*.
 - 2. Twelve apostles – *forsook Him and fled*.
 - 3. 120 faithful (Acts 1:15).
 - 4. 3,000 obedient (Acts 2:41).
- C. The growth of the kingdom is extraordinary.
 - 1. 5,000 (Acts 4:4).
 - 2. Multitudes added (Acts 5:14).
 - 3. Numbers multiplied greatly (Acts 6:7).
 - 4. Multiplied again (Acts 9:31).
 - 5. Into all the world (Colossians 1:6).
- D. Compare this parable to the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2:44:45).

III. The Peripherals

- A. In this parable, the birds are not a specific symbol of anything.
- B. Compare with the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29).

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Lesson Five

The Parable of the Leaven

Texts: Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21

I. The Parable

- A. Leaven is a substance used to produce fermentation in dough or liquid.
- B. In Scripture, the idea of leaven is most often used to illustrate corruption.
 - 1. During the Passover Feast, the Israelites were to use no leaven (Exo. 12:15-20).
 - 2. Leaven was not to be used in sacrifices made to God (Lev. 2:11-13; 6:14-18).
 - 3. The false doctrine of the Pharisees is referred to as “leaven” (Matt. 16:6, 12).
 - 4. Sin and error in the church are compared to leaven (1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9).
- C. In this parable, leaven is used because of the nature of the way it works.
 - 1. It does not imply corruption.
 - 2. Remember, both Satan and Jesus are symbolized by lions (1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 5:5).
- D. It would be common to see a woman baking bread by “hiding” the leaven (lump of fermented dough) in the flour that would become a new loaf.

II. The Purpose

- A. Similar to the parable of the mustard seed, this parable shows the growth of the kingdom.
- B. However, the details of this parable emphasize a different aspect of the growth.
 - 1. The growth of the kingdom takes place within the heart of man (like the leaven hidden within the lump).
 - 2. It is not forced upon anyone from without (unlike Islam or Catholicism).
 - 3. “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).
 - 4. As God’s Word works in the hearts of men and women it produces the fruits of obedience in their lives – making them citizens of the kingdom.
- C. The influence of one person can affect an entire family, congregation, community or country! *{May our influence always be for good and not evil!}*

III. The Peripherals

- A. There is no hidden meaning to the “three measures of meal.”
 - 1. This was the same as an ephah (8 – 12 quarts).
 - 2. The same amount Sarah prepared for their 3 visitors (Gen. 18:6).
 - 3. The same amount Gideon offered to the Angel of the Lord (Jud. 6:19).
 - 4. It does not have some symbolic meaning (such as, body, soul and spirit).
- B. The phrase “till the whole was leavened” should not be taken to mean that eventually everyone will obey the Gospel of Christ and become a part of His kingdom.
 - 1. It does indicate that the Gospel was worldwide in scope (Mark 16:15-16).
 - 2. It also indicates that the Gospel would influence the world.

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Lesson Six

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure / Pearl of Great Price

Texts: Matthew 13:44-46

I. The Parable

- A. It was a common practice for men to hide their valuables by burying them (cf. Mt 25:18).
 - 1. They had no banks, checkbooks, credit cards, etc.
 - 2. Houses were not very safe (cf. Matthew 6:19).
 - 3. To carry money around was dangerous (cf. Luke 10:30).
 - 4. Thus, it was also common to discover hidden treasure.
- B. It may also indicate discovering great value in the land itself (such as a mine, etc.).
- C. The value of pearls has been known for many years.
 - 1. In Scripture, the pearl always refers to something of great value (Rev. 21:21).
 - 2. It is said that Cleopatra had two pearls that were worth \$400,000 each!

II. The Purpose

- A. To teach and emphasize the inestimable value of the kingdom of Christ.
- B. An important difference between the two parables.
 - 1. The first tells of a man who was not searching for treasure, but happened upon it.
 - 2. The second tells of a man who was searching for treasure and found it.
- C. The value of the kingdom demands certain things...
 - 1. Sacrifice (cf. Matthew 19:21-22; 6:33; Luke 9:23; Philippians 3:7-8).
 - 2. Urgency.
 - 3. Joy.
- D. Why is the kingdom of Christ so valuable?
 - 1. It was prepared by God (Ephesians 3:9-11; Galatians 4:4).
 - 2. It was purchased by Christ (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25).
 - 3. It is promised a home in Heaven (Hebrews 12:28; 1 Corinthians 15:24).

III. The Peripherals

- A. The “morality” of the man who found the hidden treasure.
- B. The fact that he hid the treasure until he could buy the land.
- C. These parables were spoken to the disciples, not the multitudes.

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Lesson Seven

The Parable of the Net

Texts: Matthew 13:47-53

I. The Parable

- A. Fishing by net was a common practice that was well known by Jesus' hearers.
 - 1. Matthew 4:18-22
 - 2. John 21:3-6
- B. The separation of fish after the catch was also understood, even as it is today.

II. The Purpose

- A. There are seven "Kingdom Parables" recorded in Matthew 13.
 - 1. **Sower** – *Types of hearts receiving the seed of the kingdom.*
 - 2. **Tares** – *Enemies of the kingdom.*
 - 3. **Mustard Seed** – *Growth of the kingdom.*
 - 4. **Leaven** – *Influence of the kingdom.*
 - 5. **Hidden Treasure** – *Value of the kingdom.*
 - 6. **Pearl of Great Price** – *Necessity of seeking the kingdom.*
 - 7. **Net** – *Final separation of the kingdom.*
- B. This parable teaches about the separation in the kingdom at the end of time.
 - 1. The parable of the sower teaches that 3 out of 4 obey the word.
 - 2. Yet, it also teaches that only 1 out of 4 remain faithful and bear fruit.
 - 3. The parable of the net illustrates what happens to the unfaithful.
- C. This separation will be at the end of the world.
 - 1. The day of judgment (Acts 17:31; John 12:48).
 - 2. The second coming of Christ (2 Thes. 1:7-9; Matt. 25:31-33).
- D. This separation will be needed.
 - 1. Some are insincere in their attitude (cf. Phil. 1:15-17; 2 Cor. 13:3).
 - 2. Some do not walk in the light (1 John 1:7).
 - 3. Some hide secret sins (1 Tim. 5:24).
 - 4. But God knows all and judges righteously (Heb. 4:13).

III. The Peripherals

- A. Verses 51-53 are peripheral to the parable, but their teaching is vitally important.
- B. One who has been educated in the Truth of the Gospel of Christ has stored up valuable treasures in his or her heart.
- C. His obligation is to bring forth those treasures for others to see and hear – in other words, to teach the Gospel with great zeal and desire.
- D. What a fitting conclusion to the parables of the kingdom!

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Lesson Eight

The Parable of the Lost Sheep / Lost Coin

Texts: Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:1-10

I. The Parable

- A. Jesus' audience understood the value of a sheep – even one out of a hundred.
- B. They knew what a person would sacrifice to find his lost sheep.
- C. They understood the joy over reclaiming a lost sheep.
- D. These same principles apply to the parable of the coin.
 - 1. The coin was a *drachma* – the Roman *denarius* – worth about 20 cents in modern currency.
 - 2. However, in Jesus' time it was the common wage for a day's work.
 - 3. Likely, there was also cultural significance to the coin.

II. The Purpose

- A. The audience:
 - 1. In Matthew 18, the audience is the disciples (vs. 1).
 - 2. In Luke 15, the audience consists of publicans, sinners, Pharisees and scribes.
- B. The context:
 - 1. In Matthew 18, the context is the pride of the disciples.
 - 2. In Luke 15, the context is the complaint of the Pharisees against Jesus.
- C. The lesson:
 - 1. In Matthew 18, this parable exposed the arrogance of the disciples.
 - a. It was a warning that their pride might cause another to stumble.
 - b. It reminded them of God's concern for all of His children.
 - 2. In Luke 15, this parable exposed the cold hearts of the Pharisees and scribes.
 - a. It illustrated why Jesus would keep company with sinners – to save them.
 - b. It was a warning to them to learn to love lost souls.
- D. The ultimate purpose is to show that God rejoices when the wayward return home!

III. The Peripherals

- A. God does not love the lost one more than the 99 who are faithful.
- B. Because the Shepherd seeks the lost sheep does not mean the sheep has no responsibility.
- C. Important lessons:
 - 1. Souls can become lost...
 - a. Due to their own carelessness or rebellion.
 - b. Due to the negative influence of others.
 - 2. While Jesus is the Good Shepherd, elders are the shepherds of the local flock.
 - 3. God cares!
 - 4. God will forgive!

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Lesson Nine

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Text: Luke 15:11-32

I. The Parable

- A. Jesus' audience understood the value of a sheep, a coin, and – certainly – a son.
- B. They understood the joy of finding that which had been lost – or welcoming home a wayward child.
- C. The story of the prodigal son is as old as humanity itself (i.e., Cain & Abel).

II. The Purpose

- A. To illustrate God's love for man, even when he is lost.
 - 1. In the two previous parables, God's love is shown by His rejoicing (vs. 7, 10).
 - 2. In this parable, His love is shown by His...
 - a. Reconnaissance (vs. 20a)
 - b. Reaction (vs. 20b)
 - c. Response (vs. 21-23)
 - d. Rejoicing (vs. 24)
- B. To illustrate the Pharisees' lack of love for man – especially the lost.
 - 1. Jesus often taught the need to forgive others (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-21, 35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 17:3-4).
 - 2. The faithful child of God will forgive, readily and quickly, a brother who repents (2 Cor. 2:5-11; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

III. The Peripherals

- A. The story of the prodigal son's fall and redemption... (7 surprises)
 - 1. He is surprised at how easy it is to leave home (vs. 11-12).
 - 2. He is surprised at how easy it is to drift away (vs. 13a).
 - 3. He is surprised at how dangerous it is away from the father (vs. 13b).
 - 4. He is surprised at how quickly one can lose all he has (vs. 14-15).
 - 5. He is surprised at how completely abandoned he was (vs. 16).
 - 6. He is surprised at how lovingly his father received him back (vs. 17-24).
 - 7. He is surprised at how angrily his brother refused to welcome him (vs. 25-32).
- B.

<u>How He Departed</u>	<u>How He Returned</u>
1. Desire (vs. 12)	Realization (vs. 17)
2. Demand (vs. 12)	Repentance (vs. 18-19)
3. Departure (vs. 13a)	Returning (vs. 20)
4. Dissipation (vs. 13b)	Resignation (vs. 21)
5. Destitution (vs. 14)	Restoration (vs. 22-23)
6. Degradation (vs. 15-16)	Rejoicing (vs. 24)

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Lesson Ten

The Parable of the Unforgiving Debtor

Text: Matthew 18:21-35

I. The Parable

- A. Abuse of debtors was commonplace in Jesus' time.
 1. Roman laws attempted prevent cruel extremes of punishment.
 2. However, imprisonment was allowed for one who was behind on payments.
 3. Furthermore, by Roman law a person could be sold – along with his family, land and/or possessions – in order to pay part or all of his debt.
- B. God's Law addressed this problem and its potential abuses.
 1. Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-41; Deuteronomy 23:19-20; Nehemiah 5:6-13
 2. Matthew 5:38-42
- C. The Rabbis taught that one should forgive a person three times, no more (cf. Amos 1:6).
- D. The amount of money owe was unable to be repaid.
 1. 10,000 talents = 10 – 12 million dollars (*in first century dollars*). {*If gold, over 150 million dollars*}
 2. The annual imperial taxes of Samaria and Judea were 600 talents.
 3. Twenty-nine talents of gold were used in building the tabernacle.
 4. David's crown weighed one talent of gold.
 5. Solomon's income for one year was 666 talents of gold.
 6. 100 pence = 15 – 20 dollars.

II. The Purpose

- A. To teach the importance of forgiving our fellow man repeatedly.
 1. Vs. 21-22 – 490 times in a day is once every three minutes!
 2. Luke 17:3-4
- B. To teach the importance of forgiving our fellow man sympathetically.
 1. Vs. 32-33 – The graciousness of God!
 2. Matthew 5:44-45; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13
- C. To teach the importance of forgiving our fellow man sincerely.
 1. Vs. 35 – *from your hearts* – not just outwardly in word alone.
 2. 2 Corinthians 2:7; Luke 23:39-43; *consider the example of Joseph...*

III. The Peripherals

- A. There will be a day of reckoning with God (Rom. 14:12; 1 Pet. 4:5).
- B. Sin makes us indebted to God (cf. Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4).
- C. Torment awaits those who do not forgive (Matthew 6:14-15; James 2:13).

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Lesson Eleven

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Texts: Luke 10:25-37

I. The Parable

- A. The individuals involved in the parable were all well known to Jesus' audience.
1. **Lawyer** – Those who studied and claimed to be experts in the Law of Moses (cf. Luke 11:45-46).
 2. **Victim** – Jewish merchants frequently traveled the road from Jerusalem to Jericho; however the identity of this man is unknown.
 3. **Thieves** – Indicates “robbers” who were interested not only in stealing, but also violence. Highway robbery was common in Jesus' time.
 - a. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was known as “the bloody way.”
 - b. During Roman occupation, it was protected by a fort and a Roman garrison.
 - c. This road passed through a wilderness (Josh. 16:1) and was narrow, rugged and desolate with numerous places for thieves to hide. (*It was a descent of over 3,000 feet in less than 20 miles.*)
 4. **Priest** – Servants of the Temple who were dedicated to the service of God. (*They were descendants of Gershon, Kohath and Merari, sons of Levi.*)
 - a. Jericho was a priestly city with some 12,000 dwelling therein.
 - b. They would be common travelers on this road, either to the Temple or returning home.
 - c. They were commanded to show mercy (Deut. 22:1-4; Isa. 58:1-7).
 - d. They would be unclean if they touched a dead body (Num. 19:16).
 5. **Levite** – Servants of the priests (also from the tribe of Levi).
 6. **Samaritan** – Those who were a mixture of Jewish and Gentile blood.
 - a. Thus, strangers to the Israelites (Luke 17:16-18).
 - b. The Jews had no dealings with them (John 4:9).
 - c. The name was often used as an insult (John 8:48).
 - d. They were outcasts, often considered second or third class citizens.
- B. The attitudes and action expressed by these individuals were also easily recognizable.
1. The lawyer's testing of Jesus...
 2. The victim's helpless condition...
 3. The thieves' cold violence...
 4. The priest's heartless, selfish indifference... (*possibly legalism*)
 5. The Levite's cruel curiosity...
 6. The Samaritan's kind compassion...
 - a. In spite of prejudice.
 - b. In spite of inconvenience.
 - c. In spite of risk.
 - d. In spite of sacrifice.
 - e. In spite of reward.

II. The Purpose

- A. To answer the question: "Who is my neighbor?"
- B. To illustrate how one is to love his neighbor.

III. The Peripherals

- A. Faithfulness to God demands action, not merely words.
- B. Analogy by Coffman:
 - 1. The wounded man stands for Adam and his descendants.
 - 2. The descent from Jerusalem represents man's fall into sin.
 - 3. The thieves symbolize the devil and his servants.
 - 4. The victim being left half-dead illustrates man's condition in sin (dead in body but immortal in spirit).
 - 5. The priest is the Law of Moses.
 - 6. The Levite is the instruction of the prophets.
 - 7. The Samaritan is Jesus.
 - 8. The inn is the church.
 - 9. The failure of the priest and Levite illustrates the failure of the Old Law to save.
 - 10. The Samaritan's paying all of the charges for the victim's healing represents Jesus' payment for the debt of sin owed by all men.

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Lesson Twelve

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Texts: Luke 12:13-21

I. The Parable

- A. The division of inheritance was familiar to the Jews (cf. Deuteronomy 21:16-17).
 1. The Law already spoke to such a matter as this.
 2. Jesus was the type of Messiah that they sought – ruler of a physical kingdom.
 3. Instead, He focuses on the problem of the heart that leads to such disputes.
- B. The word “barns” refers to storehouses or granaries. It comes from a word that means “to treasure or to lay by.”

II. The Purpose

- A. To warn against covetousness.
 1. Though this man became wealthy by legitimate means, there was still danger.
 2. The love of money has destroyed many (1 Timothy 6:6-10).
 - a. Achan (Joshua 7).
 - b. Gehazi (2 Kings 5:21-27).
 - c. Judas (John 12:4-6; Matthew 26:14-16).
 - d. The rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22).
 - e. False teachers (Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:1-3).
 3. Riches can cause man to forget God (Deuteronomy 8:13-14).
 4. Riches can give a false sense of security (Matthew 19:23).
 5. Riches can turn a child of God away from faithful service (Mark 4:19).
 6. Riches can make fools out of men!
- B. To focus man’s attention on the spiritual rather than the physical.
 1. There is more to life than the physical (Matthew 16:26).
 2. Death and Judgment await all men (Prov. 27:1; James 4:14-15; 1 John 2:15-17).
 3. “You can send your treasures on, but you can’t take them with you!” (Col. 3:1-2)
- C. The Application by Jesus – Luke 12:22-34
 1. The child of God must not worry over the physical necessities of life.
 2. God will care for His children.
 3. The Christian must put the kingdom of God (and the spiritual) first.
 4. The follower of Christ will use his wealth to help others (1 Tim. 6:17-19).

III. The Peripherals

- A. Sometimes it is better not to involve one’s self in another’s problems.

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Lesson Thirteen

The Parable of the Watchful Servants

Texts: Luke 12:35-48

I. The Parable

- A. To gird up one's loins was to prepare for action – freedom of movement (cf. 1 Pet. 1:13).
- B. The burning of lights indicates an attitude of watchfulness for the return of the master.
 - 1. During the wedding festivities, the groom would claim his bride and together they would return to his home.
 - 2. The time of this event was unknown and usually late into the night.
 - 3. The servants were to watch and wait for the couple's return.
- C. The servants would wait upon the bride and groom upon their return.
 - 1. However, in the parable, the bridegroom would serve the servants!
 - 2. The illustration is that when Jesus returns, His servants will be blessed indeed!
 - 3. Jesus was a servant of man (John 13:4; Philippians 2:7; etc.).
- D. The methods of a thief are easily understood by all (cf. Matt. 24:43-44; 1 Thes. 5:2-4).
- E. A faithful and wise servant is one who does what his master commands.
 - 1. A servant is also a steward – responsible for the master's business (1 Cor. 4:2).
 - 2. The faithful servant will be blessed by his master (cf. Joseph; Daniel; etc.).
- F. An unfaithful servant uses his lord's delay to practice selfishness and wickedness.
 - 1. Being "sawn asunder" was a form of punishment in other times (Heb. 11:37).
 - 2. Beating, whipping, and scourging were also common forms of punishment.

II. The Purpose

- A. To contrast the attitude of the faithful with that of the foolish (cf. vs. 13-21).
 - 1. The foolish have their hearts centered on earthly things.
 - 2. The faithful have their hearts centered on heavenly things.
- B. To emphasize the need to be ready always to stand before the Lord.
 - 1. At death (James 4:14; Hebrews 9:27).
 - 2. Or, at the Lord's return (Matthew 25:13; etc.).

III. The Peripherals

- A. Degrees of punishment...
 - 1. Being cut asunder indicates death.
 - 2. Having a portion with the unbelievers indicates fellowship.
 - 3. Those who know God's will and disobey will be punished with many stripes.
 - 4. Those who do not know God's will and disobey will be punished with few stripes.
 - 5. But, **BOTH** shall be punished!
- B. No one knows the time when the Lord shall return...

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Fourteen

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

Texts: Luke 13:1-9

I. The Parable

- A. References to fig trees in the Bible...
 - 1. Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:7).
 - 2. Land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 8:8; Numbers 13:23).
 - 3. Their destruction a symbol of God's punishment (Jeremiah 5:17; Amos 4:9).
 - 4. Their growth a symbol of peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25).
- B. Wild fig trees are usually barren, but necessary for pollination of other fig trees.
- C. Cycle of growth...
 - 1. Fig trees are slow to mature.
 - 2. They usually grow to 10 – 15 feet tall (sometimes as tall as 25 feet).
 - 3. Their foliage provides abundant shade (cf. John 1:48).
 - 4. They produce two (sometimes three) crops a year.
 - a. The first crop ripens in June from the previous year's sprouts.
 - b. The 2nd crop ripens in August from the present year's sprouts.
 - c. From December to March, the fig tree will be bare of leaves and fruit.
 - d. In early spring, tiny figs will appear ("untimely figs" [Rev. 6:13]), followed by leaves.
 - i. Most of these will fall to the ground before ripening.
 - ii. This explains Jesus' actions in cursing the barren fig tree (cf. Matthew 21:18-20; Mark 11:12-13).
 - e. Thus, the first crop comes from the ripening of these "untimely figs."
- D. The context...
 - 1. Blaming God leads to barrenness!
 - a. The Jews of old accused God of being too difficult to please and too hard to obey (Micah 6:1-8).
 - b. In Paul's day they blamed God for the fact that they had rejected Jesus and were lost (Rom. 9-11).
 - 2. Repentance of such actions and of such an attitude is essential! (Cf. Matt. 25:24)

II. The Purpose

- A. To accuse the Jews of their erroneous attitude (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1-14).
- B. To emphasize what would bring about the doom of Israel. {*Their personal responsibility*}

III. The Peripherals

- A. The importance of bearing fruit...
- B. The punishment of the unfruitful...
- C. The longsuffering nature of God...
- D. The certainty of judgment...

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Fifteen

The Parable of the Chief Seats

Texts: Luke 14:1-11

I. The Parable

A. The context...

1. The Pharisees were watching Jesus (cf. Luke 6:7).
2. A man with dropsy needed to be healed.
 - a. Dropsy – literally, “countenance of water.”
 - b. It signifies the accumulation of water in various parts of the body.
3. The Jewish tradition said it was unlawful to heal on the Sabbath day.
 - a. John 9:6-7, 13-16
 - b. John 7:23; Matthew 12:8-14; Luke 13:14-16
4. Thus, Jesus confronted their hypocrisy and their pride.

B. The details...

1. The table at a wedding feast (or some similar occasion) was usually three tables arranged in the shape of a U.
2. The chief room (literally, the first couch or chief place) at the table was most often at the center of the table that made up the bottom of the U. {*The inside of the U shape was kept open for servants to wait upon the guests.*}
3. Upon witnessing the guests arguing over their seats, Jesus speaks this parable.

C. Roman, Greek and Jewish historians all write of the reality of this kind of dispute.

D. Jesus’ teaching on the matter was no new doctrine...

1. The Law of Moses taught the same idea (Proverbs 25:6-7).
2. The Jewish rabbis (such as Akiba) taught this same lesson to their disciples.

E. However, Jesus’ teaching has a deeper meaning and emphasis than common courtesy.

II. The Purpose

- A. To illustrate the arrogant hypocrisy of the Jews toward the physically destitute.
- B. To illustrate the arrogant hypocrisy of the Jews toward the spiritually destitute.
- C. To teach that humility is necessary in order to be accepted by God.
 1. Pride prohibits access (Matthew 18:1-4; James 4:6).
 2. Pride causes division (Matthew 20:20-28; 1 Peter 5:5-6; 3 John 9-11).
 3. Pride hinders service (Mark 9:34-35; John 13:13-17; Mark 14:36).
 4. Pride rejects Jesus (Philippians 2:1-11; Romans 8:29).

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Sixteen

The Parable of the Great Supper

Texts: Luke 14:12-24

I. The Parable

A. The context...

1. A warning against pride and a desire for power.
2. A misunderstanding of the kingdom of God.

B. The details...

1. They were witnessing an example of a great supper even then.
2. The customs of the day are reflected in Jesus' words...
 - a. A part of the preparation of the feast was inviting others to attend.
 - b. When all was prepared, a servant was sent to call upon those invited.
3. To refuse the call to the feast was an insult (and, often, an occasion for war).
4. The listeners would have readily understood the insulting nature of the excuses.
5. The destitute were in abundant supply in the land of Palestine.
6. No doubt it would seem shocking for a man of such wealthy estate to allow such guests of a lower class to share in his feast.
7. But, his reasoning could not be misunderstood or condemned.

II. The Purpose

A. To teach that many of the Jews would not have a part in the kingdom of God.

1. Indeed, the Jews had been invited to enjoy the blessings of God's kingdom.
2. However, they had numerous excuses for their disobedience of God's Word.
 - a. Heritage (John 12:42-43; 8:31-47).
 - b. Possessions (Matthew 19:22; cf. Judas).
 - c. Family (Matthew 10:32-39).
 - d. Tradition (Matthew 15:1-9; 16:21-26).

3. Thus, they would be rejected and replaced by those who would heed the call.
 - a. Those invited and chosen would be repugnant to the Jews.
 - b. In fact, they would be Gentiles – from the highways and hedges.

B. To drive home the previous teaching about their arrogant and prideful hypocrisy.

1. This parable is connected to the previous one concerning their pride.
2. Their arrogance and hypocrisy were separating them from the kingdom of God.
3. The humble – from any walk of life – would be accepted before the Jews.

III. The Peripherals

A. Who is the "certain man?" Who is the "servant?"

B. The excuses answered...

1. Purchased a field? See Matthew 13:44!
2. Bought oxen for plowing? See Luke 9:62!
3. Married a wife? See 2 Corinthians 11:2

C. Notice that the "maimed and halt" were excluded from Jewish worship (Lev. 21:17-23).

D. There is always room at the table of the Lord!

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Seventeen

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

Texts: Luke 18:1-8

I. The Parable

- A. The role of judges went all the way back to the time of Moses (Exodus 18:21-22).
 1. Usually, each city would have at least one judge (sometimes more).
 2. They were bound by the law to be just, honest and fair.
 3. See: Exodus 21:6; 21:22; 22:8-9; 23:6-9; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:18-20; 25:1; 2 Chronicles 19:5-7; Psalm 82:2; Isaiah 1:23; Micah 3:11; 7:3...
 4. They were specifically charged with ensuring justice to the downtrodden – the poor, oppressed, widows and orphans (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 24:17-21; 27:19; Psalm 68:5; Proverbs 31:9; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; Malachi 3:5).
- B. However, it was common for a judge to be less than just in his rulings.
- C. To be a widow in that culture was to be without hope.
- D. This widow had one who opposed her at law; thus, she sought for justice (vengeance).
- E. The judge was unjust and would not come to the aid of the widow.
- F. However, because of her persistence, the mind of the judge was changed.

II. The Purpose

- A. To encourage men to pray without ceasing.
 1. Even a judge who is unjust, who does not fear God, and who does not respect his fellow man can be persuaded by persistence.
 2. If such a wicked judge will hear the pleas of this widow, how much more will a loving God hear the prayers of His children!
 3. Compare with Luke 11:1-13.
 4. Jesus is not teaching that God will hear us only because we pray a lot; rather, He is teaching that we ought to keep on praying when it seems like God is not answering!
 5. Jesus is not teaching that God answers our prayers to stop our bothering Him; rather, He is emphasizing the effectiveness of a Christian's prayers!
- B. To teach about the nature of faith.
 1. Faith is persistent (cf. Matthew 15:21-28).
 2. Faith is prayerful (cf. Genesis 18:23-33).
 3. Faith is powerful (cf. Genesis 32:26-28).

III. The Peripherals

- A. Sometimes, right actions come from wrong motives.
- B. Consider that the widow did not "take the law into her own hands."
- C. The Pharisees cared little for widows (cf. Matthew 23:14; James 1:27).

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Eighteen

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican

Texts: Luke 18:9-14

I. The Parable

- A. The Temple was to be a house of prayer (Luke 19:46; Acts 3:1).
- B. The contrasts between the two men...
 - 1. The Pharisee
 - a. The name Pharisee means, “the separate ones.”
 - b. They believed in strict separation from everyone except Jews.
 - c. They were outwardly moral, but inwardly hypocritical.
 - 2. The Publican
 - a. A Jew who collected taxes for the Roman government.
 - b. Considered a traitor to his nation and, often, to God.
 - c. Imagine Jesus exalting the publican and condemning the Pharisee!
- C. The contrasts between the two prayers...
 - 1. The Pharisee’s Prayer
 - a. Was “with himself” (outward vs. inward).
 - b. Was very favorable toward himself (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:12).
 - i. Happy to mention his virtues.
 - ii. No mention of his sins.
 - iii. No request for forgiveness, mercy or help.
 - c. Was very unfavorable toward others.
 - d. Was without any true understanding of God (cf. Luke 5:8).
 - 2. The Publican’s Prayer
 - a. It was prayed “afar off” from the Pharisee and the Holy Place.
 - b. It was prayed with humility before God.
 - c. It was prayed with contrition over sin.
 - d. It was prayed with honest simplicity.
- D. The contrasts between the two answers...
 - 1. The Pharisee went away without anything – *he had asked for nothing*.
 - 2. The Publican went away justified – a forgiven recipient of the mercy of God.

II. The Purpose

- A. To illustrate the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisees.
 - 1. In his prayer, the Pharisee demonstrates that he felt he did not need God.
 - 2. That attitude brings with it condemnation (Matthew 5:20).
- B. To warn against the dangers of pride.

III. The Peripherals

- A. God hears – is aware of – all prayers; but, He does not approve of or accept all.
- B. Is standing the only proper posture for prayer?

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Nineteen

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

Texts: Matthew 20:1-16

I. The Parable

- A. The householder is the master of the house – charged with its concerns.
- B. He was responsible for seeing that the work of the house was done.
 - 1. Sometimes this required hiring laborers.
 - 2. The unemployed would gather at dawn to await the chance of being hired.
 - 3. Normally, enough workers would be hired for the day.
 - 4. On this occasion the master went back at 9:00, noon, 3:00 and at 5:00.
- C. The penny is the Roman *denarius* – a silver coin worth about seventeen cents.
 - 1. It was the daily wage of a Roman soldier in Jesus' day.
 - 2. Thus, it was a fair and generous wage for a day's work.

II. The Purpose

- A. To illustrate the faithfulness and justness of God.
- B. The context... "*Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*"
 - 1. Matthew 19:27-30
 - 2. Peter contrasts the disciples with the rich, young ruler (19:21-26).
 - 3. Jesus assures him that he will be rewarded, for God is faithful.
 - 4. However, God is also just; and, all those who "forsake all" will be rewarded.
 - 5. Furthermore, the reward is the same for all!
 - a. Blessings in this life (cf. Luke 18:28-30).
 - b. Eternal life in Heaven (Matthew 25:34, 46).

III. The Peripherals

- A. God's blessings can cause some to sin (vs. 15; cf. Jonah).
- B. There is work to do in the kingdom of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; etc.).
- C. God needs workers (1 Corinthians 15:58)!
- D. Do not wait until the eleventh hour – it may not come!

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty

The Parable of the Pounds

Texts: Luke 19:11-27

I. The Parable

- A. A nobleman going away to receive a kingdom was an actual occurrence (cf. Herod).
- B. Herod's son, Archelaus, was so hated by the people that they begged the Roman Emperor not to allow him to become ruler over them.
- C. A pound is a piece of money, valued at about \$17.50.
- D. Servants were often given charge over their master's affairs when he was to be away.
- E. On this occasion, the amount entrusted to them is small – this is a test of their faithfulness

II. The Purpose

- A. The context...
 - 1. The story of Zacchaeus...
 - a. Emphasizes the love of God for all.
 - b. Emphasizes the mission of Christ – spiritual salvation from sin.
 - 2. Near to Jerusalem...
 - a. Indicates that Jesus is nearing the end of His earthly work.
 - b. Indicates His awareness of His approaching death.
 - 3. Misunderstanding about the kingdom...
 - a. The Jews believed that when Jesus entered Jerusalem He would claim the throne (cf. Luke 19:28-40).
 - b. Thus, Jesus explains that the kingdom would not appear as they thought.
- B. The kingdom...
 - 1. Given to Jesus when He ascended to the Father (Dan. 7:13-14; Psa. 24:7-10; Acts 2:32-36; Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Pet. 3:22).
 - 2. Faithfulness is demanded of its citizens.
 - 3. There will be a day of reckoning when the King returns (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).
 - 4. The faithful servant will be rewarded.
 - 5. The fearful will be punished.
 - 6. Those who reject the King will be punished.

III. The Peripherals

- A. Jesus will return, but not to set up a kingdom!
- B. We must faithfully serve our Lord as we await His return!

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-one

The Parable of the Two Sons

Texts: Matthew 21:28-32

I. The Parable

- A. Everyone understands a father's authority over his children.
 1. A reasonable request – the work needed to be done “today.”
 2. A reasonable request – the sons had the ability to perform the work.
- B. Everyone understands the responses of children to their father's authority.
 1. One response was without care or concern for the father or the work.
 2. The other was insincere.

II. The Purpose

- A. The context...
 1. Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (vs. 1-11). {"Hosanna" = "save now!"}
 2. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (vs. 12-13).
 3. Jesus' miracles (vs. 14-22).
 4. Jesus' authority questioned (vs. 23-27). {*The hypocrisy of the Jews is exposed.*}
- B. To illustrate why the Jews would not enter into the kingdom of God.
 1. The father is God, who asks His children to work in His vineyard.
 2. The Jews are represented by the insincere son.
 - a. He answered with the correct words, "I go, sir."
 - b. But, he was insincere – he did not go and work.
 3. The Jews claimed to be God's faithful children with their mouths, but the actions of their lives proved otherwise.
 4. They knew that the teaching of John and Jesus was from God, but they refused to obey!
- C. To illustrate why the "sinners" would enter into the kingdom of God.
 1. The sinners are represented by the rebellious son.
 - a. He answered with selfishness, "I will not."
 - b. But, he repented of this attitude and went and worked.
 2. The sinners were living in open rebellion to God's will.
 3. However, upon hearing the Gospel they repented and obeyed.

III. The Peripherals

- A. An important lesson about repentance.
 1. Repentance is a change of mind.
 2. Repentance results in obedience.
- B. An important lesson about obedience.
 1. Individual responsibility.
 2. Individual choice (free will).
 3. Identical commands.

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-two

The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

Texts: Matthew 21:33-46 Mark 12:1-12 Luke 20:9-19

I. The Parable

- A. “Vineyards were as common in first century Palestine as ...cotton fields in the South.”
- B. Vineyards were hedged for protection.
- C. A winepress was built in anticipation of the harvest of fruit.
- D. A tower was built for lodging, protection and watchfulness.
- E. The owner would often hire husbandmen to work his vineyard.
- F. The servants of the householder were to be treated as the owner himself.
- G. The son of the owner would come in his father’s name – with his complete authority.
- H. The punishment describe by the Jews certainly was just.

II. The Purpose

- A. The context...
 - 1. Spoken on Tuesday before Jesus was crucified on Friday.
 - 2. Opposition from Jewish leaders is increasing.
 - 3. Follows the parable of the two sons.
- B. The prophets...
 - 1. Vs. 33 – Isaiah 5:1-4
 - 2. Vs. 34-36 – Matthew 5:12; 23:31-37; Acts 7:52; Hebrews 11:36-38
 - 3. Vs. 37-39 – Isaiah 53; John 1:11
 - 4. Vs. 42-44 – Psalm 118:22-23; Isaiah 28:16; Acts 4:11; Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8
- C. The purpose...
 - 1. To reveal the true attitude of the Jewish leaders (vs. 38).
 - 2. To allow them to condemn themselves for rejecting Jesus (vs. 41).
 - 3. To teach them why they would not enter into the kingdom of Christ (vs. 43).

III. The Peripherals

- A. The word “winepress” indicates that “wine” was not always fermented.
- B. Jesus was not afraid of “offending” His audience by convicting them of sin.
- C. To attack the apostles, prophets or Son of God is to attack God Himself.
- D. God’s Will cannot be defeated by man’s will.

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-three

The Parable of the Wedding Feast

Texts: Matthew 22:1-14

I. The Parable

- A. There are many similarities between this parable and the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:12-24; *Lesson 16*).
- B. However, there are also some significant differences.
- C. The repast...
 - 1. In this parable, the feast is a wedding supper for the son of the king.
 - 2. It would be an honor to be invited to such a feast.
- D. The rejection...
 - 1. Those who were invited refused to attend the wedding feast, though the invitation was extended repeatedly.
 - 2. They had placed other things as higher priorities.
 - 3. They were so ungrateful that they even killed the servants of the king.
 - 4. Their punishment by the king certainly was justified.
- E. The reception...
 - 1. Because those invited rejected the king, others now received an invitation.
 - 2. They were the poor and destitute, good and bad.
- F. The rebellion...
 - 1. In spite of the kindness showed him by the king, one of the guests rebelled.
 - 2. Because he was not wearing the proper garment, he was cast out from the feast.
 - 3. These garments were provided by the king as a gift to his guests.

II. The Purpose

- A. To emphasize why the Jews would not enter into the kingdom of Christ.
 - 1. The king is God; His Son is Jesus.
 - 2. Those who reject and kill His servants are the Jews.
- B. To illustrate why the Gentiles would enter into the kingdom of Christ.
 - 1. Those who receive the invitation are the Gentiles.
 - 2. They are “good and bad” – indicating that the Gospel invitation is for all!
- C. To educate why a disciple could be excluded from the kingdom of Christ.
 - 1. Many of the disciples of Jesus would become unfaithful (cf. John 6).
 - 2. Many of those who obey the Gospel become unfaithful (cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-22).
 - 3. It is possible for a Christian to be lost.

III. The Peripherals

- A. This parable serves as an introduction to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 24...

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-four

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Texts: Matthew 25:1-13

I. The Parable

A. The Wedding...

1. Customarily, there were 10 witnesses for any solemn occasion.
2. It was also a custom for the groom to travel with his friends to the house of the bride and bring her and her friends back to his house.
3. The friends (virgins) were to keep company with the bride until the arrival of the groom.
4. Then, with their lamps lit, they were to accompany her to the groom's house.

B. The Waiting...

1. The exact time of the groom's arrival was not known by the bride or her friends.
2. Thus, they had to be prepared to wait for any length of time.
3. To trim one's lamp meant to trim the wicks, replenish the oil and relight them.

II. The Purpose

A. The context...

1. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (24:1-35).
2. The end of time (24:36-44).
3. The return of Jesus (24:45-51).

B. To inform the disciples that it was possible for some of them to be lost.

1. The foolish virgins literally said, "Our lamps are going out."
 - a. The wise did not have this worry for they were prepared.
 - b. The foolish, however, have been negligent and are not ready.
2. Their lamps were going out because they were doing nothing.
 - a. They were not rebellious.
 - b. They were not deceived.
 - c. Their sin was not deliberate.
 - d. They were negligent... They were overconfident...

C. To encourage the disciples always to watch and be ready!

1. Even though the hour of His return is unknown, we know enough to be ready.
2. Those who are ready will enter into the wedding feast.
3. There are no second chances for those who are unprepared.

III. The Peripherals

- A. "Every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5). (Cf. Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10)
- B. When Jesus will return should not be man's most important consideration.
- C. The Second Coming of Christ will be a day of joy and reward for those who are prepared, and a day of sadness and exclusion for those who are not ready.

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-five

The Parable of the Talents

Texts: Matthew 25:14-30

I. The Parable

- A. What is a talent?
1. A talent is a measure of weight, usually of either silver or gold.
 2. One talent of silver was worth about \$750 - \$1,000.
 3. One talent of gold was worth about \$15,000.
 4. The weight of a talent was about 58 pounds.
- B. These servants were not hired, but were the man's own.
- C. Hiding treasures in the earth was a common practice in this time.
- D. It was common for a faithful servant to be rewarded with authority and by allowing him to reside in the king's house.

II. The Purpose

- A. To teach disciples the need for faithfulness while awaiting the Lord's return.
1. From the parable of the virgins we learned to be ready always.
 2. From the parable of the talents we learn to be working always.
 - a. The virgins waited, and the foolish did nothing.
 - b. The servants worked, and the wicked did nothing.
 3. Faithfulness exemplified...
 - a. Urgency (vs. 15).
 - b. Energy (vs. 16-17).
 - c. Reliability (vs. 19).
 - d. Victory (vs. 20-23).
 4. Failure described...
 - a. Lack of concern (vs. 18).
 - b. Lack of responsibility (vs. 24).
 - c. Lack of courage (vs. 25).
 - d. Lack of anything (vs. 26-30).
- B. To teach the importance of using what God has given us to His glory.
1. The talents were given to every man according to his ability.
 2. Their duty was stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2).

III. The Peripherals

- A. The context of this parable is the time while the Lord is away, awaiting His return.
1. During that time we are to grow individually (2 Pet. 1:5-8; Gal. 5:22-23).
 2. During that time we are to evangelize (John 15:1-8; Mark 16:15-16).
 3. During that time we are to love our fellow man (Luke 10:25-37).
- B. Are we using our "talents" to accomplish this work?

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-six

The Parable of the Unjust Steward

Texts: Luke 16:1-13

I. The Parable

- A. The relationship between the wealthy and their stewards is generally understood.
- B. This steward was accused of wastefulness and embezzlement.
- C. Naturally, one found guilty of such a charge would be dismissed – fired.
- D. The steward was unwilling to engage in hard labor or beg, so he came up with a plan.
 - 1. He knew his guilt and was aware of the punishment that was to come.
 - 2. So, he began to work to improve his situation with his master’s debtors.
 - 3. Thus, when he was fired they would think kindly of him.
 - 4. In order to accomplish this he begins to relieve them of part of their debt.
- E. When his master learned what he had done, he commended him for his wisdom.
 - 1. The steward was completely dishonest.
 - 2. But, he still had enough wisdom to provide for his future.
 - 3. He was commended for his wisdom and initiative, not his dishonesty.
 - a. This principle is not uncommon in Jesus’ teaching.
 - b. Luke 18:1-8

II. The Purpose

- A. The audience – (1) disciples [vs. 1] and (2) Pharisees [vs. 14].
- B. To warn against the love of money.
 - 1. This was the problem of the Pharisees (vs. 14).
 - 2. They were not faithful with their blessings (vs. 10-13).
 - 3. Matt. 6:24; Mark 10:21-25; 1 Tim. 6:6-19; 3:3; etc.
- C. To teach us to use material things to prepare for eternity.
 - 1. Verse 9 is the key to understanding the parable.
 - 2. Jesus says, “Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon...” (ASV).
 - a. The steward made friends by appealing to their wealth.
 - b. The result was his protection and provision when he lost his job.
 - c. He used what he had to prepare for the future.
 - 3. In like manner, disciples are to use what God gives us to prepare for eternity.
 - a. It is called “mammon of unrighteousness” because it is the wealth of a wicked world.
 - b. It does not mean “filthy lucre” or dirty money.
 - 4. This does not mean that one can buy his way into Heaven (1 Pet. 1:18-19)!

III. The Peripherals

- A. It is never too late to begin thinking about and preparing for eternity!
- B. We ought to use our earthly treasures to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven!
- C. Who is our master: God or gold?

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-seven

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Texts: Luke 16:19-31

I. The "Parable" That Is Not A Parable

- A. The time for parables has ended!
- B. What is a parable?
 - 1. An earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
 - 2. "A story by which something real in life is used as a means of presenting a moral thought" (D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, p. 227).
 - 3. Literally, to throw alongside of.
- C. Why this story is not a parable...
 - 1. It is not an earthly story (vs. 19-21 fit this description, but no more).
 - 2. Lazarus and Abraham are called by name – they are specific individuals.
 - 3. It is not told in the style of a parable and cannot be interpreted as a parable.
- D. Why some want this story to be a parable...
 - 1. To deny the doctrine of Hell as a place of torment and pain.
 - 2. To deny that man continues to exist consciously after death.

II. The Purpose

- A. The context...
 - 1. 16:1-13 – Proper use of material blessings.
 - 2. 16:14-18 – The selfishness and covetousness of the Pharisees.
 - a. They turned up their noses at Jesus.
 - b. They chose their will above God's.
 - c. They rejected a spiritual kingdom, but would violently take a physical one.
 - d. They desired others' mates and would twist God's law to get them.
 - 3. 16:19-31 – The destiny of the covetous and selfish.
- B. To teach that a lifetime of selfishness and covetousness brings eternal destruction.
 - 1. The rich man was very wealthy – purple was the color of king's clothing.
 - a. This is a man the Pharisees would identify with and aspire to be.
 - b. It is also, too often, "the American Dream."
 - 2. Lazarus was a man the Pharisees liked to pretend did not exist.
 - 3. Both experienced what all men must face – death.
 - 4. Yet, death was not the end of the existence of either.
 - a. In Abraham's bosom (paradise – Lk. 23:43), Lazarus was comforted.
 - b. In the fire, the rich man was tormented.
 - c. Notice (v. 24) that the rich man still wants a servant!
 - 5. The rich man had not used his wealth wisely; now, he will suffer permanently.
 - 6. There is a means of preventing such eternal suffering – hear and obey God!

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-eight

The Parables of the New Garment and the New Wine

Texts: Matthew 9:14-17 Mark 2:18-22 Luke 5:33-39

I. The Parable

A. New Cloth and Old Garments

1. An old garment has been worn and washed; thus, it has shrunk.
2. New cloth has not been through that process.
3. If new cloth is used to patch an old garment, the new cloth will shrink and cause a greater tear in the garment.

B. New Wine and Old Bottles

1. The word “bottles” is actually “wineskins.”
2. Animal skins, usually goat, were used as containers for wine and other liquids.
3. An old, used wineskin has been stretched and has become dirty.
4. To put new wine into an old wineskin would cause the new wine to ferment and break the wineskin.
5. New wine must be put in new wineskins...
 - a. To spare the wineskin.
 - b. To preserve the freshness of the wine.
6. The word “wine” can refer to grape juice – it does not always mean a fermented, alcoholic drink.

II. The Purpose

A. To teach that the doctrine of Christ (the Gospel) is always new and fresh.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. New Testament | Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:8, 13 |
| 2. New Doctrine | Mark 1:27; John 13:34 |
| 3. New Creation | 2 Cor. 5:17 |
| 4. New Man | Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10 |
| 5. New Life | Rom. 6:3-4 |
| 6. New Home | 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5 |

B. To show how the doctrine of Christ is incompatible with any other doctrine.

1. Not with the Old Testament (Heb. 8:8, 13).
2. Not with the traditions of men (Mark 7:7-8).

III. The Peripherals

A. Luke 5:39 – In this verse, Jesus is not teaching that old wine is better than new.

1. This statement is still a part of the parable.
2. He is teaching about the attitude of the Pharisees toward their traditions.
3. They were so set in their ways that they would not even consider what Jesus had to say.
4. They said, “We like it our way (old wine), thus there is no need to try the new way (new wine).”
5. Plummer says, “The prejudiced person will not even try the new, or admit that it has any merits. He knows that the old is pleasant, and suits him; and that is enough; he is not going to change.”

B. Jesus nowhere teaches or condones the drinking of alcoholic beverages!

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Twenty-nine

The Parable of the Builders

Texts: Matthew 7:24-27 (Luke 6:47-49)

I. The Parable

- A. An enduring house must begin with a solid and strong foundation.
 - 1. The idea is not just building on top of a rock.
 - 2. Rather, it is digging down to solid rock and then building (Luke 6:48).
- B. To build upon the sand is to build without a foundation (cf. Luke 6:49).
- C. Times of great rainfall could be very dangerous in the area around the Jordan River.
 - 1. The landscape of Palestine is crossed by many *wadis*.
 - 2. A *wadi* is simply a dry riverbed.
 - 3. However, in times of rain they fill and flood very violently, often overflowing.
 - 4. Anything in their vicinity is in danger of being destroyed and swept away.

II. The Purpose

- A. The context...
 - 1. The Sermon on the Mount – must be practiced, not just heard.
 - 2. The specific application is as an illustration of 7:21-23.
- B. To teach that claiming Jesus as Lord demands obedience to His Will.
 - 1. This principle has always been true for God's people (Eze. 33:30-32).
 - 2. It continues to be true today (James 1:23-25).
- C. To teach that the disobedient are foolish and not approved of nor in fellowship with God, in spite of their claims to the contrary.

III. The Peripherals

- A. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. John 13:13).
- B. All men are builders; death is a rest from labor (Rev. 14:13) and judgment is based upon how we have worked (2 Cor. 5:10).
- C. Storms of life will come. Is your house built on an enduring foundation?

Conclusion: *We have studied the parables of Jesus. Will you be a hearer only?*