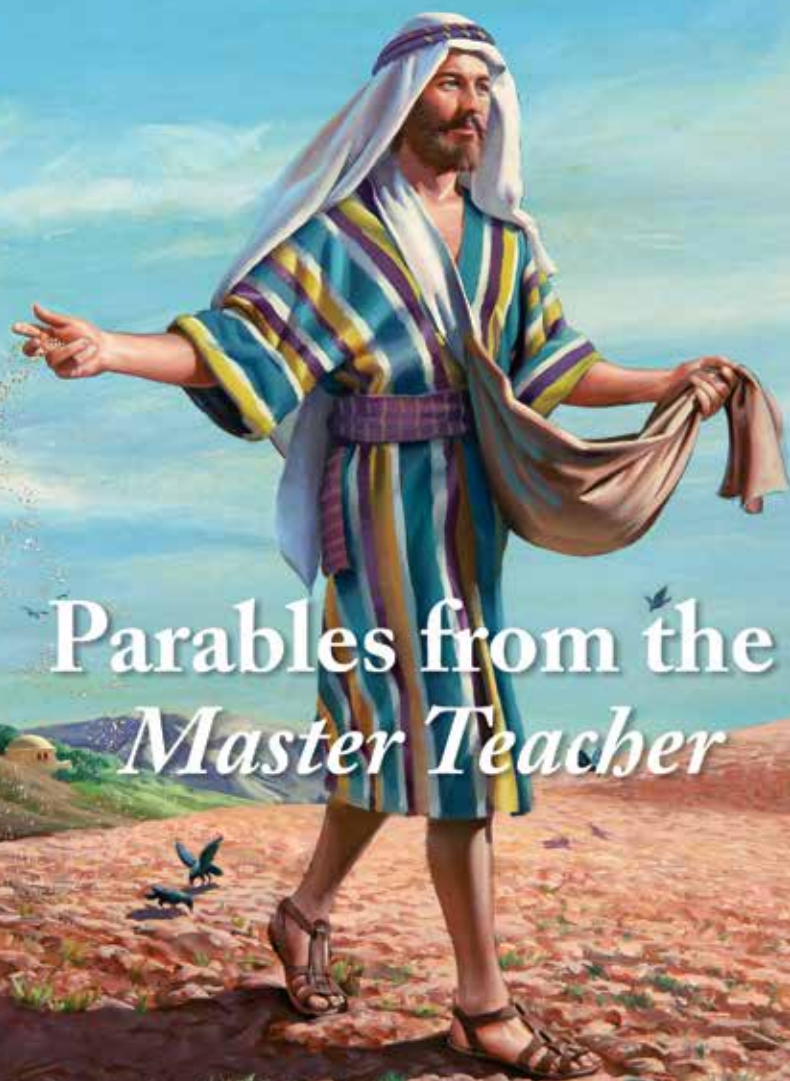


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



Parables from the
Master Teacher

Vol. 94, No. 2

April–June, 2018

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

When Jesus was on earth, He was recognized as a greater teacher than the highest educators of His time. Yet His methods of teaching were simple. He used the common practice of parable teaching to reveal great truths to the people.

“Jesus met the people on their own ground, as one who was acquainted with their perplexities. He made truth beautiful by presenting it in the most direct and simple way. His language was pure, refined, and clear as a running stream. . . . But while His teaching was simple, He spoke as one having authority. This characteristic set His teaching in contrast with that of all others. The rabbis spoke with doubt and hesitancy, as if the Scriptures might be interpreted to mean one thing or exactly the opposite. The hearers were daily involved in greater uncertainty. But Jesus taught the Scriptures as of unquestionable authority. Whatever His subject, it was presented with power, as if His words could not be controverted.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 253.

“Christ had truths to present which the people were unprepared to accept or even to understand. For this reason also He taught them in parables. By connecting His teaching with the scenes of life, experience, or nature, He secured their attention and impressed their hearts. Afterward, as they looked upon the objects that illustrated His lessons, they recalled the words of the divine Teacher. To minds that were open to the Holy Spirit, the significance of the Saviour’s teaching unfolded more and more. Mysteries grew clear, and that which had been hard to grasp became evident. . . .

“In parables He rebuked the hypocrisy and wicked works of those who occupied high positions, and in figurative language clothed truth of so cutting a character that had it been spoken in direct denunciation, they would not have listened to His words, and would speedily have put an end to His ministry. . . .

“So in every line of useful labor and every association of life, He desires us to find a lesson of divine truth. Then our daily toil will no longer absorb our attention and lead us to forget God; it will continually remind us of our Creator and Redeemer. The thought of God will run like a thread of gold through all our homely cares and occupations.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 21–27.

May God help us to find lessons from our daily work and associations which will draw our thoughts upward to Him. As we study this quarter’s lessons, may we refocus our life so that by beholding Christ and His great love in the common things of daily living we may be changed into His image.

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a sanitarium in Venezuela

Venezuela, officially called the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, is a federal republic located on the northern coast of South America. The country has over 31 million inhabitants, of which 71% are Catholic and 17% Protestant. Venezuela has experienced economic turmoil and food shortages in recent years. We believe the following counsels are especially applicable to the Lord's work in Venezuela at this time:



“God has qualified His people to enlighten the world. He has entrusted them with faculties by which they are to extend His work until it shall encircle the globe. In all parts of the earth they are to establish sanitariums, schools, publishing houses, and kindred facilities for the accomplishment of His work.

“The closing message of the gospel is to be carried to ‘every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people’ (Revelation 14:6). In foreign countries many enterprises for the advancement of this message must yet be begun and carried forward. . . . Medical missions are to be established to act as God’s helping hand in ministering to the afflicted.”—*Counsels on Health*, p. 215.

In Venezuela, we have been engaged in the development and establishment of a small sanitarium. This project is moving ahead steadily. Appropriate land has been purchased and engineering drawings have been developed. Many of our believers are excited by this project and have made humble donations, and others have pledged to continue working until the successful completion of the project. The Lord Jesus has moved upon human resources willing to serve where He calls, both in construction and in medical and nursing. But we do not want to move forward without having all the necessary resources needed to finish the work and ensure success as counseled by inspiration.

In view of the urgent need for finances to complete construction, we humbly ask in the love of Jesus Christ, for financial help to build a place to help the sick, the needy, and for the salvation of many souls afflicted by sin. May God be glorified in this work. Thank you for your generous donations.

Your brethren and sisters in Venezuela

The Sower

“For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns” (Jeremiah 4:3).

“The garden of the heart must be cultivated. The soil must be broken up by deep repentance for sin. Poisonous, Satanic plants must be uprooted. The soil once overgrown by thorns can be reclaimed only by diligent labor. So the evil tendencies of the natural heart can be overcome only by earnest effort in the name and strength of Jesus.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 56.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 33–61.

Sunday

April 1

1. TEACHING IN PARABLES

- a. **What circumstances existing among God's professed people at the time of Christ's ministry made the use of parables necessary? Matthew 13:10–13.**

“The gospel of Christ was a stumbling block to [the Jewish people] because they demanded signs instead of a Saviour. They expected the Messiah to prove His claims by mighty deeds of conquest, to establish His empire on the ruins of earthly kingdoms. This expectation Christ answered in the parable of the sower. Not by force of arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 35.

- b. **To what prophecy did Jesus relate His teaching in parables? Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:14, 15.**

“To minds that were open to the Holy Spirit, the significance of the Saviour's teaching unfolded more and more. Mysteries grew clear, and that which had been hard to grasp became evident.”—*Ibid.*, p. 21.

2. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

a. What was the parable of the sower about? Matthew 13:3–8.

“That with which the parable of the sower chiefly deals is the effect produced on the growth of the seed by the soil into which it is cast. . . . The question of greatest importance to you is, How do you treat My message? Upon your reception or rejection of it your eternal destiny depends.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 43, 44.

b. What is meant by the seed sown by the wayside? Matthew 13:19.

“The seed sown by the wayside represents the word of God as it falls upon the heart of an inattentive hearer. Like the hard-beaten path, trodden down by the feet of men and beasts, is the heart that becomes a highway for the world’s traffic, its pleasures and sins. Absorbed in selfish aims and sinful indulgences, the soul is ‘hardened through the deceitfulness of sin’ (Hebrews 3:13). The spiritual faculties are paralyzed. Men hear the word but understand it not. They do not discern that it applies to themselves. They do not realize their need or their danger. They do not perceive the love of Christ, and they pass by the message of His grace as something that does not concern them.”—*Ibid.*, p. 44.

c. How does God consider those who sow discord in the church? Proverbs 6:16–19. How does this practice aid the devil in his work? Luke 8:11, 12.

“Many who profess to be Christians are aiding the tempter to catch away the seeds of truth from other hearts. Many who listen to the preaching of the word of God make it the subject of criticism at home. . . . The message that should be regarded as the word of the Lord to them is dwelt upon with trifling or sarcastic comment. The minister’s character, motives, and actions, and the conduct of fellow members of the church, are freely discussed. Severe judgment is pronounced, gossip or slander repeated, and this in the hearing of the unconverted. Often these things are spoken by parents in the hearing of their own children. Thus are destroyed respect for God’s messengers, and reverence for their message. And many are taught to regard lightly God’s word itself.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 45, 46.

3. UNWILLING TO SACRIFICE

- a. **What happened to the seed which fell upon stony ground? Matthew 13:20, 21.**
-

“Many who make a profession of religion are stony-ground hearers. Like the rock underlying the layer of earth, the selfishness of the natural heart underlies the soil of their good desires and aspirations. The love of self is not subdued. They have not seen the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the heart has not been humbled under a sense of its guilt. This class may be easily convinced, and appear to be bright converts, but they have only a superficial religion.

“It is not because men receive the word immediately, nor because they rejoice in it, that they fall away. . . . [They] do not count the cost. They do not consider what the word of God requires of them. They do not bring it face to face with all their habits of life, and yield themselves fully to its control.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 46, 47.

- b. **How did the rich young ruler show himself to be a stony-ground hearer? Matthew 19:22. How can we show the same attitude? John 6:60.**
-

“Many receive the gospel as a way of escape from suffering, rather than as a deliverance from sin. They rejoice for a season, for they think that religion will free them from difficulty and trial. While life moves smoothly with them, they may appear to be consistent Christians. But they faint beneath the fiery test of temptation. They cannot bear reproach for Christ’s sake. When the word of God points out some cherished sin, or requires self-denial or sacrifice, they are offended. It would cost them too much effort to make a radical change in their life. They look at the present inconvenience and trial, and forget the eternal realities.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 47, 48.

- c. **What does God require of us, and how did Jesus leave an example for us? Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1; 5:6–8.**
-

“Christ gave all for us, and those who receive Christ will be ready to sacrifice all for the sake of their Redeemer. The thought of His honor and glory will come before anything else.”—*Ibid.*, p. 49.

4. CHOKED BY THE THORNS OF WORLDLINESS

- a. **What is meant by the thorns which choke the good seed? Mark 4:18, 19; Luke 8:14.**
-

- b. **What should we remember in order to prevent the cares of this life from choking the good seed of truth? Matthew 6:25–32; Psalm 55:22.**
-

“Christians must work, they must engage in business, and they can do this without committing sin. But many become so absorbed in business that they have no time for prayer, no time for the study of the Bible, no time to seek and serve God. At times the longings of the soul go out for holiness and heaven; but there is no time to turn aside from the din of the world to listen to the majestic and authoritative utterances of the Spirit of God. The things of eternity are made subordinate, the things of the world supreme. It is impossible for the seed of the word to bring forth fruit; for the life of the soul is given to nourish the thorns of worldliness.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 51, 52.

- c. **What attitude shows that the good seed is being choked by worldly riches? Deuteronomy 8:17.**
-

“The love of riches has an infatuating, deceptive power. Too often those who possess worldly treasure forget that it is God who gives them power to get wealth. . . . Instead of regarding wealth as a talent to be employed for the glory of God and the uplifting of humanity, they look upon it as a means of serving themselves.”—*Ibid.*, p. 52.

- d. **How can we prevent “the lusts of other things” from choking the Word? Mark 4:19; Matthew 6:33, 34.**
-

“‘And the lusts of other things’ (Mark 4:19). These are not necessarily things sinful in themselves, but something that is made first instead of the kingdom of God. Whatever attracts the mind from God, whatever draws the affections away from Christ, is an enemy to the soul.”—*Ibid.*, p. 53.

5. THE SEED PLANTED IN GOOD GROUND

- a. **If our hearts are like the good ground, how will we receive the Word of God?** 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Jeremiah 15:16.

“Only he who receives the Scriptures as the voice of God speaking to himself is a true learner. . . .

“The word of God often comes in collision with man’s hereditary and cultivated traits of character and his habits of life. But the good-ground hearer, in receiving the word, accepts all its conditions and requirements. His habits, customs, and practices are brought into submission to God’s word. In his view the commands of finite, erring man sink into insignificance beside the word of the infinite God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 59, 60.

- b. **How important is the personal cultivation of the heart?** Jeremiah 4:3, 4.

“Throughout the parable of the sower, Christ represents the different results of the sowing as depending upon the soil. In every case the sower and the seed are the same. Thus He teaches that if the word of God fails of accomplishing its work in our hearts and lives, the reason is to be found in ourselves. But the result is not beyond our control. True, we cannot change ourselves; but the power of choice is ours, and it rests with us to determine what we will become. The wayside, the stony-ground, the thorny-ground hearers need not remain such. The Spirit of God is ever seeking to break the spell of infatuation that holds men absorbed in worldly things, and to awaken a desire for the imperishable treasure.”—*Ibid.*, p. 56.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Who only is able to understand Christ’s teachings?**
2. **How can we help the wayside hearer?**
3. **Some readily accept the truth and fail to count the cost. What is this cost?**
4. **How can something good choke the precious seeds of truth?**
5. **As we study the Word of God, what will we notice about some of our habits and character traits? What should we do about these?**

Planting the Seed of Truth

“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

“While the human sower is planting the seed to sustain our earthly life, the Divine Sower will plant in the soul the seed that will bring forth fruit unto life everlasting.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 89.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 62–69, 76–89.

Sunday

April 8

1. THE POWER IS FROM GOD

a. To whom do we owe our existence? Acts 17:28; Isaiah 44:24.

b. What two things does God provide to all mankind in order to sustain life? Matthew 5:45. How does God’s power work in the spiritual realm? Isaiah 55:10, 11.

“There is life in the seed, there is power in the soil; but unless an infinite power is exercised day and night, the seed will yield no returns. The showers of rain must be sent to give moisture to the thirsty fields, the sun must impart heat, electricity must be conveyed to the buried seed. The life which the Creator has implanted, He alone can call forth. Every seed grows, every plant develops, by the power of God. . . .

“As in the natural, so in the spiritual sowing; the teacher of truth must seek to prepare the soil of the heart; he must sow the seed; but the power that alone can produce life is from God. There is a point beyond which human effort is in vain. While we are to preach the word, we cannot impart the power that will quicken the soul, and cause righteousness and praise to spring forth. In the preaching of the word there must be the working of an agency beyond any human power. Only through the divine Spirit will the word be living and powerful to renew the soul unto eternal life.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 63, 64.

2. SOWING THE SEED

a. What is represented by the seed in the parables of Jesus? Luke 8:11.

b. Where should we sow this seed? Ecclesiastes 11:6; Isaiah 32:20.

“To sow beside all waters means to give wherever our help is needed. This will not tend to poverty. ‘He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully’ (2 Corinthians 9:6). By casting it away the sower multiplies his seed. So by imparting we increase our blessings. God’s promise assures a sufficiency, that we may continue to give.

“More than this: as we impart the blessings of this life, gratitude in the recipient prepares the heart to receive spiritual truth, and a harvest is produced unto life everlasting. . . .

“The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man.”—*Education*, pp. 109, 110.

c. How should we sow the gospel seed, and why? 2 Corinthians 9:6.

“We are to sow beside all waters, keeping our souls in the love of God, working while it is day, using the means entrusted to us in the Master’s service. Whatever our hands find to do, we are to do it with cheerfulness; whatever sacrifice we are called upon to make, we are to make it cheerfully. As we sow beside all waters, we shall realize the truth of the words, ‘He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.’

“We owe everything to grace, sovereign grace. Grace ordained our redemption, our regeneration, and our adoption to heirship with Jesus Christ. Let this grace be revealed to others.

“The Saviour takes those whom He finds will be molded, and uses them for His own name’s glory. He uses material that others would pass by, and works in all who will give themselves to Him. He delights to take apparently hopeless material, those whom Satan has debased, and through whom he has worked, and make them the subjects of His grace. He rejoices to deliver them from suffering, and from the wrath that is to fall upon the disobedient. He makes His children His agents in the accomplishment of this work, and in its success, even in this life, they find a precious reward.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 256.

3. THE GROWTH OF THE SEED

- a. How does the good seed grow in the heart? Zechariah 4:6; Hosea 14:5, 7; Mark 4:26, 27.

“The plant grows by receiving that which God has provided to sustain its life. It sends down its roots into the earth. It drinks in the sunshine, the dew, and the rain. It receives the life-giving properties from the air. So the Christian is to grow by cooperating with the divine agencies. Feeling our helplessness, we are to improve all the opportunities granted us to gain a fuller experience. As the plant takes root in the soil, so we are to take deep root in Christ. As the plant receives the sunshine, the dew, and the rain, we are to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 66, 67.

- b. How do we know whether the seed growing in our heart is good or bad? Luke 6:45. What does God want us to do as the good seed grows within us? Verse 38.

“Words and acts testify plainly what is in the heart. If vanity and pride, love of self and love of dress, fill the heart, the conversation will be upon the fashions, the dress, and the appearance, but not upon Christ or the kingdom of heaven. If envious feelings dwell in the heart, the same will be manifested in words and acts. . . .

“Some dwell upon what they shall eat and drink and wherewithal they shall be clothed. Their hearts are filled with these thoughts, and they flow out from the abundance of the heart, as though these things were their grand aim in life, their highest attainment.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 283.

“The heart that has once tasted the love of Christ, cries out continually for a deeper draft, and as you impart you will receive in richer and more abundant measure. . . . To Jesus, who emptied Himself for the salvation of lost humanity, the Holy Spirit was given without measure. So it will be given to every follower of Christ when the whole heart is surrendered for His indwelling.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 20, 21.

- c. In what areas of our experience does God especially want to see growth? 2 Peter 3:18; 2 Thessalonians 1:3.
-

4. LESSONS FROM A SMALL SEED

- a. **What lessons can we learn from the mustard seed? Mark 4:30–32.**
-

“The seed from which sprang this giant [mustard] plant was among the least of all seeds. At first it sent up a tender shoot, but it was of strong vitality, and grew and flourished until it reached its present great size. So the kingdom of Christ in its beginning seemed humble and insignificant. Compared with earthly kingdoms it appeared to be the least of all. By the rulers of this world Christ’s claim to be a king was ridiculed. Yet in the mighty truths committed to His followers the kingdom of the gospel possessed a divine life. And how rapid was its growth, how widespread its influence! When Christ spoke this parable, there were only a few Galilean peasants to represent the new kingdom. Their poverty, the fewness of their numbers, were urged over and over again as a reason why men should not connect themselves with these simple-minded fishermen who followed Jesus. But the mustard seed was to grow and spread forth its branches throughout the world. When the earthly kingdoms whose glory then filled the hearts of men should perish, the kingdom of Christ would remain, a mighty and far-reaching power.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 77, 78.

- b. **How important are the things in life which we consider just little things? Are they really little things? Song of Solomon 2:15.**
-

“A single grain of wheat, increased by repeated sowings, would cover a whole land with golden sheaves. So widespread may be the influence of a single life, of even a single act.”—*Education*, p. 109.

- c. **What do we know about the development of a plant from a seed? Mark 4:26–29. How does this growth relate to our own development?**
-

“In the earliest years of the child’s life the soil of the heart should be carefully prepared for the showers of God’s grace. Then the seeds of truth are to be carefully sown and diligently tended. And God, who rewards every effort made in His name, will put life into the seed sown; and there will appear first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 201.

5. THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

- a. What will determine what we reap in the harvest? Galatians 6:7, 8; Matthew 7:16, 17.

“By the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unvarying certainty. The reaping testifies to the sowing. Here no pretense is tolerated. Men may deceive their fellow men and may receive praise and compensation for service which they have not rendered. But in nature there can be no deception. On the unfaithful husbandman the harvest passes sentence of condemnation. And in the highest sense this is true also in the spiritual realm. . . . [The man in any business or profession who is untrue to his highest responsibilities] may flatter himself that, so long as the wrong is concealed, he is gaining an advantage. But not so; he is cheating himself. The harvest of life is character, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come.

“The harvest is a reproduction of the seed sown. Every seed yields fruit after its kind. So it is with the traits of character we cherish. Selfishness, self-love, self-esteem, self-indulgence, reproduce themselves, and the end is wretchedness and ruin. . . . Love, sympathy, and kindness yield fruitage of blessing, a harvest that is imperishable.”—*Education*, pp. 108, 109.

- b. What will we reap if we put God above every earthly consideration? Luke 18:29, 30.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Although the seed has life in itself, what is needed to make it grow? What is needed for growth in the spiritual realm?
2. What should be our attitude in sowing the gospel seed? How has the Saviour given us an example in this regard?
3. If we have good seed growing in our heart, what will our conversation be upon?
4. How does the mustard seed illustrate the growth of God's kingdom?
5. What do we need to sow in order to reap an imperishable harvest?

The Tares Among the Wheat

“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field” (Matthew 13:24).

“Many will be in heaven who their neighbors supposed would never enter there. Man judges from appearance, but God judges the heart. The tares and the wheat are to grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 71.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 70–75.

Sunday

April 15

1. THE WORK OF GOD

a. **Where was the good seed sown? Matthew 13:24.**

“‘The field,’ Christ said, ‘is the world’ (Matthew 13:38). But we must understand this as signifying the church of Christ in the world. The parable is a description of that which pertains to the kingdom of God, His work of salvation of men; and this work is accomplished through the church. True, the Holy Spirit has gone out into all the world; everywhere it is moving upon the hearts of men; but it is in the church that we are to grow and ripen for the garner of God.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 70.

b. **What is the object of God's highest regard in this world? Zechariah 2:8 (last part); Ephesians 5:25.**

“I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. While He extends to all the world His invitation to come to Him and be saved, He commissions His angels to render divine help to every soul that cometh to Him in repentance and contrition, and He comes personally by His Holy Spirit into the midst of His church.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 15.

2. HINDERING THE WORK OF THE ENEMY

- a. **Who else is engaged in sowing, and what does he sow? Matthew 13:38, 39.**
-

“The tares represent a class who are the fruit or embodiment of error, of false principles. ‘The enemy that sowed them is the devil’ (Matthew 13:39). Neither God nor His angels ever sowed a seed that would produce a tare. The tares are always sown by Satan, the enemy of God and man.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 71.

“While the Lord brings into the church those who are truly converted, Satan at the same time brings persons who are not converted into its fellowship. While Christ is sowing the good seed, Satan is sowing the tares. There are two opposing influences continually exerted on the members of the church. One influence is working for the purification of the church, and the other for the corrupting of the people of God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 46.

- b. **In the parable, when did the enemy work? Matthew 13:25. What can we learn from this?**
-

“When the word is spoken, you should remember, brethren, that you are listening to the voice of God through His delegated servant. Listen attentively. Sleep not for one instant, because by this slumber you may lose the very words that you need most—the very words which, if heeded, would save your feet from straying into wrong paths. Sometimes young men and women have so little reverence for the house and worship of God that they keep up a continual communication with each other during the sermon. Could these see the angels of God looking upon them and marking their doings, they would be filled with shame, with abhorrence of themselves. God wants attentive hearers. It was while men slept that Satan sowed his tares.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 493.

- c. **How could his work have been prevented? 1 Thessalonians 5:5–8.**
-

“If faithfulness and vigilance had been preserved, if there had been no sleeping or negligence upon the part of any, the enemy would not have had so favorable an opportunity to sow tares among the wheat. Satan never sleeps. He is watching, and he improves every opportunity to set his agents to scatter error, which finds good soil in many unsanctified hearts.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 113.

3. WHEAT AND TARES COMMINGLED

- a. **What did the servants discern when the blade appeared? Matthew 13:26. What did they propose to do in order to preserve the purity of the crop? Verses 27, 28.**
-

“Christ’s servants are grieved as they see true and false believers mingled in the church. They long to do something to cleanse the church. Like the servants of the householder, they are ready to uproot the tares.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 71.

- b. **What was the directive of the Master concerning the tares? Why? Matthew 13:29, 30.**
-

“As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast.”—*Ibid.*, p. 72.

“In His mercy and long-suffering, God bears patiently with the perverse and even the falsehearted. Among Christ’s chosen apostles was Judas the traitor. Should it then be a cause of surprise or discouragement that there are falsehearted ones among His workers today? If He who reads the heart could bear with him who He knew was to be His betrayer, with what patience should we bear with those at fault.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 493.

- c. **Why cannot the Master’s instruction be used to justify leaving open sinners in the church? Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:6, 11, 13.**
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“As a people professing to be reformers, treasuring the most solemn, purifying truths of God’s word, we must elevate the standard far higher than it is at the present time. Sin and sinners in the church must be promptly dealt with, that others may not be contaminated. Truth and purity require that we make more thorough work to cleanse the camp from Achans. Let those in responsible positions not suffer sin in a brother. Show him that he must either put away his sins or be separated from the church.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 147.

4. IN THE CHURCH

- a. **How is the work of separating the wheat from the tares symbolized? Ezekiel 9:2–4. When does this work begin? Revelation 14:9–13.**

“I then saw the third angel. Said my accompanying angel, ‘Fearful is his work. Awful is his mission. He is the angel that is to select the wheat from the tares, and seal, or bind, the wheat for the heavenly garner. These things should engross the whole mind, the whole attention.’”—*Early Writings*, p. 118.

“The time of the judgment is a most solemn period, when the Lord gathers His own from among the tares. Those who have been members of the same family are separated. A mark is placed upon the righteous.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 234.

“The angel is to place a mark upon the forehead of all who are separated from sin and sinners, and the destroying angel will follow, to slay utterly both old and young.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 505.

- b. **Why is God the only one capable of judging those who are not open sinners? Psalm 7:9 (second part); 44:21; Proverbs 21:2.**

“Should we try to uproot from the church those whom we suppose to be spurious Christians, we should be sure to make mistakes. Often we regard as hopeless subjects the very ones whom Christ is drawing to Himself. Were we to deal with these souls according to our imperfect judgment, it would perhaps extinguish their last hope. Many who think themselves Christians will at last be found wanting.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 71, 72.

- c. **What evidence shows that the destiny of each class is fixed before the close of probation? Revelation 22:11.**

“There is no time when all the wicked will turn to God. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest. . . .

“When the work of the gospel is completed, there immediately follows the separation between the good and the evil, and the destiny of each class is forever fixed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 123.

5. IN THE WORLD

- a. For what purpose will the wheat be in contact with the tares in the world until the very end? 1 Peter 2:9 (second part).

“The day is just upon us when the righteous shall be bound like precious grain in bundles for the heavenly garner, while the wicked are, like the tares, gathered for the fires of the last great day. But the wheat and tares ‘grow together until the harvest’ (Mathew 13:30). In the discharge of life’s duties the righteous will to the last be brought in contact with the ungodly. The children of light are scattered among the children of darkness, that the contrast may be seen by all. Thus are the children of God to ‘show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 100.

- b. What great separation will take place in the very end? Matthew 13:40–43; 15:13; 24:31. What Old Testament feast pointed to that time? Leviticus 23:34.

“The Feast of Tabernacles was not only commemorative but typical. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and pointed forward to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth His reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner. At that time the wicked will all be destroyed.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 541.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Where are we to grow in our faith, and how does God send help for us?
2. How can you prevent Satan from sowing tares in your heart while you are at church?
3. Why should we be long-suffering with our brethren and sisters?
4. Why can't we uproot from the church those who we think are tares?
5. What is the purpose of the children of light being scattered among the children of darkness? Do I blend in with the light or the darkness?

The Leaven of Truth

“Another parable spake he unto them; the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matthew 13:33).

“The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 98.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 95–102.

Sunday

April 22

1. LIKENED TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- a. What were some of the Bible meanings of leaven? Luke 12:1; 1 Corinthians 5:8.

“Among the Jews leaven was sometimes used as an emblem of sin. At the time of the Passover the people were directed to remove all the leaven from their houses as they were to put away sin from their hearts.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 95, 96.

- b. What, however, was the application made by Jesus to the leaven used in His parable? Luke 13:20, 21.

“In the Saviour's parable, leaven is used to represent the kingdom of heaven. It illustrates the quickening, assimilating power of the grace of God.

“None are so vile, none have fallen so low, as to be beyond the working of this power. In all who will submit themselves to the Holy Spirit a new principle of life is to be implanted; the lost image of God is to be restored in humanity.”—*Ibid.*, p. 96.

2. CAPTIVATED BY CHRIST

- a. **How does God want to transform our life and for what purpose?**
Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:5.
-

“All true reformation begins with soul-cleansing. It is by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the mind through the power of the Holy Spirit, that a change is wrought in the life. . . .

“If we would permit our minds to dwell more upon Christ and the heavenly world, we should find a powerful stimulus and support in fighting the battles of the Lord. Pride and love of the world will lose their power as we contemplate the glories of that better land so soon to be our home. Beside the loveliness of Christ, all earthly attractions will seem of little worth.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

“When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed.

“Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 104.

- b. **How does God want to change our thoughts?** 2 Corinthians 3:18;
Philippians 2:3, 4.
-

“By beholding Christ we become changed. If the mind dwells upon temporal things constantly, these things become all-absorbing, affecting the character, so that God’s glory is lost sight of and forgotten. The opportunities that are within reach for them to become conversant with heavenly things, are overlooked. Spiritual life dies.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

“By having a knowledge of Christ— His words, His habits, and His lessons of instruction—we borrow the virtues of the character we have so closely studied and become imbued with the spirit we have so much admired.”—*Ibid.*, p. 235.

“As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 85.

3. A HEART TRANSPLANT

- a. When does the leaven of truth begin to work? Jeremiah 29:13. Where does God start? Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19.

“As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 97.

“The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

“Put your whole being into the Lord’s hands—soul, body, and spirit—and resolve to be His loving, consecrated agency, moved by His will, controlled by His mind, infused by His Spirit.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 105.

- b. Describe the process by which the leaven works from within the heart. John 3:3–5.

“When truth becomes an abiding principle in the life, the soul is ‘born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever’ (1 Peter 1:23). This new birth is the result of receiving Christ as the Word of God. When by the Holy Spirit divine truths are impressed upon the heart, new conceptions are awakened, and the energies hitherto dormant are aroused to cooperate with God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 520.

“When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride. . . .

“In humble, grateful dependence he who has been given a new heart relies upon the help of Christ. He reveals in his life the fruit of righteousness. He once loved himself. Worldly pleasure was his delight. Now his idol is dethroned, and God reigns supreme. The sins he once loved he now hates. Firmly and resolutely he follows in the path of holiness.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 72, 74.

4. AGENTS OF CHANGE

- a. **What is one of the means God uses to change the character? Romans 10:17; John 17:17.**

“The leaven of truth works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By it the impure are cleansed, washed in the blood of the Lamb. Through its life-giving power it brings all there is of mind and soul and strength into harmony with the divine life. Man with his human nature becomes a partaker of divinity. Christ is honored in excellence and perfection of character. As these changes are effected, angels break forth in rapturous song, and God and Christ rejoice over souls fashioned after the divine similitude.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 102.

“If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. The Holy Spirit comes to convict of sin, and the faith that springs up in the heart works by love to Christ, conforming us, body, soul, and spirit, to His will.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 21.

- b. **How does the Holy Spirit work in the life to effect change? John 3:8. How does this compare with the work of the leaven in the flour?**

“The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 98, 99.

- c. **What will guide our decisions in our changed life? John 8:29.**

“The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 97, 98.

5. THE LEAVEN AT WORK IN THE LIFE

- a. What is a basic attribute of God's kingdom? 1 John 4:10; John 3:16.

"In the contemplation of Christ we linger on the shore of a love that is measureless. We endeavor to tell of this love, and language fails us. We consider His life on earth, His sacrifice for us, His work in heaven as our advocate, and the mansions He is preparing for those who love Him, and we can only exclaim, O the height and depth of the love of Christ!"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 333, 334.

- b. How will this attribute be shown in our dealings with others? John 13:34; 1 John 4:11; Colossians 3:12.

"We should be self-forgetful, ever . . . watching for opportunities to cheer others and lighten and relieve their sorrows and burdens by acts of tender kindness and little deeds of love. These thoughtful courtesies, that, commencing in our families, extend outside the family circle, help make up the sum of life's happiness."—*My Life Today*, p. 192.

"During every hour of Christ's sojourn upon the earth, the love of God was flowing from Him in irrepressible streams. All who are imbued with His Spirit will love as He loved. The very principle that actuated Christ will actuate them in all their dealing one with another."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 678.

"If Christ dwells in us, we shall reveal His unselfish love toward all with whom we have to do."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 162.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What power is shown by the leaven in the Saviour's parable?
2. If we fill our thoughts with Christ and heaven, what effect will this change have upon our spiritual experience?
3. Why does a genuine life change work like the leaven, from within outward?
4. What are some ways the leaven of truth change us? What happens to our natural inclinations? What does this transformation mean?
5. How can we show the love of Christ to others?

First Sabbath Offering for World Missions



We live in the last moments of the history of planet Earth, and our Lord has anxiously been waiting for a long time to take us home. The prophetic events that unfold right before our eyes tell us that the second coming of Jesus is near, even at the door. Unfortunately, the gospel message has not reached the end of the world and not every person has had the opportunity to hear the truth for this time. “Men will soon be forced to great decisions, and they must have opportunity to hear and to understand Bible truth, in order that they may take their stand intelligently on the right side.”—*Evangelism*, p. 25.

As members of God’s church, it is our privilege to represent His character and to take part in spreading the gospel to the end of the world by committing our time, strength, and financial resources to this special work.

Thanks to the prayers and financial contributions from our members and friends, new missions are being instituted in many regions. These new missions still need our support until they are well established and become self-supporting. We also need to carry forward the opening of new missions. Every year we collect a special offering to supply the necessary means to spread the message in many parts of the globe.

“At this time there should be representatives of present truth in every city, and in the remote parts of the earth. The whole earth is to be illuminated with the glory of God’s truth. The light is to shine to all lands and all peoples. And it is from those who have received the light that it is to shine forth.”—*Ibid.*, p. 407.

“Missionaries are needed in fields that have yet been scarcely entered. New fields are constantly opening. The truth must be translated into different languages, that all nations may enjoy its pure, life-giving influences.”—*Ibid.*, p. 409.

This Sabbath we earnestly appeal to you to unite your efforts with those of the missionaries and their families by giving liberally to the support of our world missions. In this way we can together help lighten the earth with God’s glory and hasten Jesus’ return.

Your brethren from the Missionary Department

The Publican and the Pharisee

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

“There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 154.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 150–163.

Sunday

April 29

1. WORSHIPPING IN THE TEMPLE

- a. What was the purpose of Jesus in giving the parable of the two worshippers? Luke 18:9.

“We must have a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge that will result in contrition, before we can find pardon and peace. . . . It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. . . . We must know our real condition, or we shall not feel our need of Christ’s help. We must understand our danger, or we shall not flee to the refuge. We must feel the pain of our wounds, or we should not desire healing.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 158.

- b. Describe the two men mentioned in the parable. Luke 18:10–13.

“The Pharisee and the publican represent two great classes into which those who come to worship God are divided. Their first two representatives are found in the first two children that were born into the world. Cain thought himself righteous, and he came to God with a thank offering only. He made no confession of sin, and acknowledged no need of mercy. But Abel came with the blood that pointed to the Lamb of God. He came as a sinner, confessing himself lost; his only hope was the unmerited love of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 152.

2. GOD'S VIEW OF THE SITUATION

- a. **What did Jesus conclude about the two men who worshipped in the temple? Luke 18:14 (first part).**
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“In order to be justified, the sinner must have that faith that appropriates the merits of Christ to his own soul. We read that the devils ‘believe, and tremble’ (James 2:19), but their belief does not bring them justification, neither will the belief of those who give a merely intellectual assent to the truths of the Bible bring them the benefits of salvation. This belief fails of reaching the vital point, for the truth does not engage the heart or transform the character.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 191, 192.

- b. **What did the Pharisee fail to see about himself? Romans 3:10–12; How can we make the same mistake?**
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“The Pharisee goes up to the temple to worship, not because he feels that he is a sinner in need of pardon, but because he thinks himself righteous and hopes to win commendation. His worship he regards as an act of merit that will recommend him to God.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 150.

“Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. They wrap themselves about with their own righteousness and are satisfied in reaching their own human standard of character; but how fatally they fail when they do not reach the divine standard, and of themselves they cannot meet the requirements of God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 320.

- c. **What general principle does Jesus teach us from this parable? Luke 18:14 (second part); 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10.**
-

“Humble yourselves, brethren. When you do this, it is possible for holy angels to communicate with you, and place you on vantage ground. Then your experience, instead of being faulty, will be filled with happiness.”—*This Day With God*, p. 35.

“God grants no pardon to him whose penitence produces no humility.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 938.

3. HAVING THE PUBLICAN'S ATTITUDE

- a. How does God view the attitude of the publican? Psalm 51:17; 102:17.
-

“Fasting or prayer that is actuated by a self-justifying spirit is an abomination in the sight of God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposing sacrifice, proclaim that the doer of these things regards himself as righteous, and as entitled to heaven; but it is all a deception. Our own works can never purchase salvation. . . .

“Man must be emptied of self before he can be, in the fullest sense, a believer in Jesus. When self is renounced, then the Lord can make man a new creature.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 280.

- b. What experience, like the publican, do we need in order to have pardon and peace? 1 John 1:9; Jeremiah 3:13.
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“It is not only at the beginning of the Christian life that this renunciation of self is to be made. At every advance step heavenward it is to be renewed. All our good works are dependent on a power outside of ourselves. Therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Only by constant renunciation of self and dependence on Christ can we walk safely.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 159, 160.

- c. What was different about the prayer of the publican? Jeremiah 29:12, 13.
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“There are two kinds of prayer—the prayer of form and the prayer of faith. The repetition of set, customary phrases when the heart feels no need of God is formal prayer. . . . We should be extremely careful in all our prayers to speak the wants of the heart and to say only what we mean. All the flowery words at our command are not equivalent to one holy desire. The most eloquent prayers are but vain repetitions if they do not express the true sentiments of the heart. But the prayer that comes from an earnest heart, when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as we would ask an earthly friend for a favor, expecting that it would be granted—this is the prayer of faith.”—*My Life Today*, p. 19.

4. AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF THE PHARISEE

- a. **What is the danger for those who do not acknowledge that they are sinners? Revelation 3:16, 17; Luke 5:31, 32.**

“He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 30.

“I am commissioned now to say to our brethren, Humble yourselves and confess your sins, else God will humble you. The message to the Laodicean church comes home to those who do not apply it to themselves.”—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 99.

- b. **What often goes hand in hand with this type of spiritual pride? Psalm 12:3. What danger is involved here? Proverbs 26:28 (last part); 29:5.**

“We need to shun everything that would encourage pride and self-sufficiency; therefore we should beware of giving or receiving flattery or praise. It is Satan’s work to flatter. He deals in flattery as well as in accusing and condemnation. Thus he seeks to work the ruin of the soul. Those who give praise to men are used by Satan as his agents. Let the workers for Christ direct every word of praise away from themselves. Let self be put out of sight. Christ alone is to be exalted.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 161, 162.

- c. **Although he was once a proud leader in Israel, how did Paul’s experience change? Philippians 3:6–9; Romans 7:9; Galatians 6:14.**

“Judged by the letter of the law as men apply it to the outward life, [Paul] had abstained from sin; but when he looked into the depths of its holy precepts, and saw himself as God saw him, he bowed in humiliation and confessed his guilt.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 29, 30.

“The nearer we come to Jesus, the more clearly we behold the purity and greatness of His character, the less we shall feel like exalting self. The contrast between our characters and His will lead to humiliation of soul and deep heart searching. The more we love Jesus, the more entirely will self be humbled and forgotten.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 46.

5. PRACTICING HUMILITY IN OUR LIFE

- a. How did Jesus show humility in His own life? **Philippians 2:5–11.**
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“The Son of man humbled Himself to become the servant of God. He submitted to abasement and self-sacrifice, even to death, to give freedom and life, and a place in His kingdom to those who believe on Him. He gave His life as a ransom for many. This should be enough to make those who are continually seeking to be first and striving for the supremacy, ashamed of their course.”—*This Day With God*, p. 356.

- b. What does Christ then require of us? **Luke 9:23. What blessings are promised to the humble? Luke 18:14 (second part); 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10.**
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“Those who believe in Christ and walk humbly with Him, . . . who watch to see what they can do to help and bless and strengthen the souls of others, cooperate with the angels who minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. Jesus gives them grace, and wisdom, and righteousness, making them a blessing to all with whom they are brought in contact. The more humble they are in their own estimation, the more blessings they receive from God, because receiving does not exalt them. They make a right use of their blessings, for they receive to impart.

“The ministering angels receive instruction from the throne of God to cooperate with human instrumentalities. They receive the grace of Christ to give it to human beings.”—*Ibid.*

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why can Christ only save those who know that they are sinners?
2. Why do you come to church?
3. How should we pray?
4. How can we overcome spiritual pride?
5. Why does God entrust His blessings to the humble?

The Prodigal Son

“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found” (Luke 15:24).

“The love of the Father toward a fallen race is unfathomable, indescribable, without a parallel.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 79.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 198–211.

Sunday

May 6

1. LURE OF THIS WORLD’S PLEASURES

- a. Although parables often have several applications, to what special class does the parable of the prodigal son apply? Luke 15:1, 2.

“In the parable of the prodigal son is presented the Lord’s dealing with those who have once known the Father’s love, but who have allowed the tempter to lead them captive at his will.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 198.

- b. When tempted by the world, what request did the younger son make, and what did the father do? Luke 15:11, 12.

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- c. What was the result of the younger son’s foolish ideas of freedom? Luke 15:13, 14; Jeremiah 17:5, 6. What may we learn from this story about selfishness?

“Whatever the appearance may be, every life centered in self is squandered. Whoever attempts to live apart from God is wasting his substance. He is squandering the precious years, squandering the powers of mind and heart and soul, and working to make himself bankrupt for eternity. The man who separates from God that he may serve himself, is the slave of mammon.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 200, 201.

2. EMPTINESS OF WORLDLY PLEASURES

- a. **What situation developed, and what did this once well-nurtured young man have to do? Luke 15:15, 16.**
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“A great famine arises, [the young man of the parable] begins to be in want, and he joins himself to a citizen of the country, who sends him into the field to feed swine. To a Jew this was the most menial and degrading of employments. The youth who has boasted of his liberty, now finds himself a slave. He is in the worst of bondage—‘holden with the cords of his sins’ (Proverbs 5:22.) The glitter and tinsel that enticed him have disappeared, and he feels the burden of his chain.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 200.

- b. **As a result of his painful and humiliating experience, how did the prodigal son respond to the power of the Holy Spirit? Luke 15:17–19.**
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“The young man turns from the swine herds and the husks, and sets his face toward home. Trembling with weakness and faint from hunger, he presses eagerly on his way. He has no covering to conceal his rags; but his misery has conquered pride, and he hurries on to beg a servant’s place where he was once a child.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 202, 203.

- c. **What lessons does Solomon give us after spending most of his life chasing happiness in wealth and worldly pleasure? Ecclesiastes 2:4–12, 17, 18.**
-

“By his own bitter experience, Solomon learned the emptiness of a life that seeks in earthly things its highest good. He erected altars to heathen gods, only to learn how vain is their promise of rest to the soul.

“In his later years, turning wearied and thirsting from earth’s broken cisterns, Solomon returned to drink at the fountain of life. The history of his wasted years, with their lessons of warning, he by the Spirit of inspiration recorded for after generations. And thus, although the seed of his sowing was reaped by his people in harvests of evil, the lifework of Solomon was not wholly lost. For him at last the discipline of suffering accomplished its work.”—*Education*, pp. 153, 154.

3. THE DEMONSTRATION OF A FATHER'S LOVE

- a. **As the prodigal son put his faith into action, what did he find out as he neared home? Luke 15:20, 21.**
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“In his restless youth the prodigal looked upon his father as stern and severe. How different his conception of him now!”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 204.

- b. **How did the father demonstrate the love and interest that he had always felt for his erring son? Luke 15:22–24.**
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“The father will permit no contemptuous eye to mock at his son's misery and tatters. He takes from his own shoulders the broad, rich mantle, and wraps it around the son's wasted form, and the youth sobs out his repentance, saying, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son’ (Luke 15:21). The father holds him close to his side, and brings him home. No opportunity is given him to ask a servant's place. He is a son, who shall be honored with the best the house affords, and whom the waiting men and women shall respect and serve.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 203, 204.

- c. **How great is the joy of our heavenly Father when a lost soul returns to Him today? Zephaniah 3:17. What command will He give? Zechariah 3:4, 5.**
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“Through [the plan of redemption] the sinner is forgiven his sins, and will be finally received into heaven—not as a forgiven culprit pardoned and released from captivity, yet looked upon with suspicion and not admitted to friendship and trust; but welcomed as a child, and taken back into fullest confidence. . . .

“We are saved because God loves the purchase of the blood of Christ; and not only will He pardon the repentant sinner, not only will He permit him to enter heaven, but He, the Father of mercies, will wait at the very gates of heaven to welcome us, to give us an abundant entrance to the mansions of the blest.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 950.

4. THE FATHER'S LOVE FOR THE SINNER

- a. **What is the attitude of the heavenly host when a sinner returns to God? Luke 15:7.**
-

“Fallen man is to learn that our heavenly Father cannot be satisfied until His love embraces the repentant sinner, transformed through the merits of the spotless Lamb of God.”—*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 99.

- b. **How deep is the love of God for man, and what does it lead Him to do? Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16; 12:32.**
-

“While the sinner is yet far from the Father's house, wasting his substance in a strange country, the Father's heart is yearning over him; and every longing awakened in the soul to return to God is but the tender pleading of His Spirit, wooing, entreating, drawing the wanderer to his Father's heart of love.

“With the rich promises of the Bible before you, can you give place to doubt? Can you believe that when the poor sinner longs to return, longs to forsake his sins, the Lord sternly withholds him from coming to His feet in repentance? Away with such thoughts! Nothing can hurt your own soul more than to entertain such a conception of our heavenly Father. He hates sin, but He loves the sinner, and He gave Himself in the person of Christ, that all who would might be saved and have eternal blessedness in the kingdom of glory.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 54.

- c. **How does God desire us to manifest this love in our own life today? 1 John 4:20, 21.**
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“When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates and ennobles the affections. This love is not contracted so as merely to include ‘me and mine,’ but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love cherished in the soul sweetens the entire life and sheds a refining influence on all around.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 223, 224.

5. A WARNING TO THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS

- a. What was of most concern to the self-justifying elder son? Luke 15:29, 30. What class of people does he represent?

“By the elder son were represented the unrepenting Jews of Christ’s day, and also the Pharisees in every age, who look with contempt upon those whom they regard as publicans and sinners. Because they themselves have not gone to great excesses in vice, they are filled with self-righteousness. . . . Like the elder son in the parable, they had enjoyed special privileges from God. They claimed to be sons in God’s house, but they had the spirit of the hireling. They were working, not from love, but from hope of reward.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 209.

- b. What was the father’s appeal to the elder brother? Luke 15:31, 32.

“In the parable the father’s remonstrance with the elder son was Heaven’s tender appeal to the Pharisees. ‘All that I have is thine’ (Luke 15:31)—not as wages, but as a gift. Like the prodigal, you can receive it only as the unmerited bestowal of the Father’s love.

“Self-righteousness not only leads men to misrepresent God, but makes them coldhearted and critical toward their brethren. The elder son, in his selfishness and jealousy, stood ready to watch his brother, to criticize every action, and to accuse him for the least deficiency. He would detect every mistake, and make the most of every wrong act. Thus he would seek to justify his own unforgiving spirit. Many today are doing the same thing. While the soul is making its very first struggles against a flood of temptations, they stand by, stubborn, self-willed, complaining, accusing.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 209, 210.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What lesson is given by the parable of the prodigal son?
2. How is a life of sin in reality a life of bondage?
3. How does God receive the sinner that returns to Him?
4. How does the Father draw the sinner to Himself?
5. How can we be like the elder son in this parable?

The Fig Tree

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5).

“The Lord wills not that any man shall perish, but that all shall come to Him and be saved. But instead of His loving-kindness softening and subduing the soul, many of the objects of His love and mercy are encouraged to more obstinate resistance. O, that men would remember that there is a limit to the forbearance of God!”—*The Review and Herald*, December 7, 1897.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 212–218.

Sunday

May 13

1. A MOTIVE FOR A PARABLE

- a. What event, that had just taken place in Jerusalem, was a motive for the presentation of the parable of the fig tree? Luke 13:1.

“The hearers told Jesus of an event which had just caused great excitement. Some of the measures of Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, had given offense to the people. There had been a popular tumult in Jerusalem, and Pilate had attempted to quell this by violence. On one occasion his soldiers had even invaded the precincts of the temple, and had cut down some Galilean pilgrims in the very act of slaying their sacrifices.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 212, 213.

- b. What shows that the Jews regarded misfortune as a punishment for sin? Luke 13:2, 4.
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“The Jews regarded calamity as a judgment on account of the sufferer's sin, and those who told of this act of violence did so with secret satisfaction. In their view their own good fortune proved them to be much better, and therefore more favored by God, than were these Galileans.”—*Ibid.*, p. 213.

2. A WARNING AND AN APPEAL

- a. **What warning and appeal did Jesus make in connection with His answer? Luke 13:3–5.**
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“As Jesus talked with the disciples and the multitude, He looked forward with prophetic glance and saw Jerusalem besieged with armies. He heard the tramp of the aliens marching against the chosen city and saw the thousands upon thousands perishing in the siege. Many of the Jews were, like those Galileans, slain in the temple courts, in the very act of offering sacrifice. The calamities that had fallen upon individuals were warnings from God to a nation equally guilty. ‘Except ye repent,’ said Jesus, ‘ye shall all likewise perish’ (Luke 13:5). For a little time the day of probation lingered for them. There was still time for them to know the things that belonged to their peace.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 213, 214.

- b. **In His teachings, what did Jesus link with the warning of judgment? Luke 9:56; John 3:17.**
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“Christ in His teaching linked with the warning of judgment the invitation of mercy.”—*Ibid.*, p. 212.

- c. **What appeal does God make to us today? Ezekiel 18:31; 33:11.**
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“Regeneration is the only path by which we can reach the holy city. It is narrow and the gate by which we enter is strait, but along it we are to lead men and women and children, teaching them that in order to be saved, they must have a new heart and a new spirit. The old hereditary traits of character are to be overcome. The natural desires of the soul must be changed. All deception, all falsifying, all evil-speaking must be put away. The new life, which makes men and women Christ-like, is to be lived. We are, as it were, to swim against the current of evil.”—*This Day With God*, p. 108.

“The Lord seeks to save, not to destroy. He delights in the rescue of sinners. ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked’ (Ezekiel 33:11). By warnings and entreaties He calls the wayward to cease from their evildoing and to turn to Him and live.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 105.

3. A SYMBOLIC TREE

- a. To confirm His warning and appeal, what parable did Jesus tell His hearers? Luke 13:6, 7. In what sense was the unfruitful fig tree a fit representation of the Jewish nation? Hosea 10:1.
-

“The people of Christ’s day made a greater show of piety than did the Jews of earlier ages, but they were even more destitute of the sweet graces of the Spirit of God. . . .

“God in His Son had been seeking fruit and had found none. Israel was a cumberer of the ground. Its very existence was a curse; for it filled the place in the vineyard that a fruitful tree might fill. It robbed the world of the blessings that God designed to give. The Israelites had misrepresented God among the nations. They were not merely useless, but a decided hindrance. To a great degree their religion was misleading, and wrought ruin instead of salvation.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 215.

- b. What shows that the blame for their failure lay at their own doors? Acts 7:51–53.
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- c. How can we also be like the unfruitful fig tree? John 15:4, 5.
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“Like the pretentious fig tree, we may be covered with leaves but be destitute of fruit. While we know that the truth we hold is as firm as the everlasting hills, how many of us are ready to settle down upon the theory of that truth, without having evidence that Christ is in them, and they in Christ? How many are content to pass on from day to day without experiencing its sanctifying influence upon the heart, which leads to good works. . . .

“We should not only take hold of the truth, but let it take hold of us; and thus have the truth in us and we in the truth. And if this is the case, our lives and characters will reveal the fact that the truth is accomplishing something for us; that it is sanctifying us and is giving us a moral fitness for the society of heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory. The truth we hold is from heaven; and when that religion finds a lodgement in the heart, it commences its work of refining and purifying.”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 9, 1878.

4. A PERIOD OF ADDED PROBATION

a. How did the dresser of the vineyard plead with the owner? Luke 13:8.

b. What parallel can be drawn between the days before the destruction of Jerusalem and the days before the end of human history? 2 Peter 3:9, 10.

“O the precious long-suffering of our merciful Saviour! O that each of the dear youth would appreciate the value of the soul that has been purchased at infinite cost on Calvary! O that each one would place a proper estimate upon the capabilities that have been given him of God! Through Christ you may climb the ladder of progress and bring every power under the control of Jesus. . . . In spirit, in thought, in word, and in action, you may make manifest that you are moved by the Spirit of Christ, and your life may wield a power of influence over others.

“We are living in altogether too solemn a period of the world’s history to be careless and negligent. . . . You must pray, believe, and obey. In your own strength you can do nothing; but in the grace of Jesus Christ, you can employ your powers in such a way as to bring the greatest good to your own soul, and the greatest blessing to the souls of others. Lay hold of Jesus, and you will diligently work the works of Christ and will finally receive the eternal reward.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 118.

c. How did Jesus, in conclusion, show that they themselves as a nation had to decide their own fate? Luke 13:9.

“Jesus did not in the parable tell the result of the gardener’s work. At that point His story was cut short. Its conclusion rested with the generation that heard His words. To them the solemn warning was given. ‘If not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.’ Upon them it depended whether the irrevocable words should be spoken. The day of wrath was near. In the calamities that had already befallen Israel, the owner of the vineyard was mercifully forewarning them of the destruction of the unfruitful tree.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 216.

5. A WARNING FOR US TODAY

- a. **What warning should believers in the threefold message take from this parable? What efforts is the Lord still making in our behalf? Isaiah 27:2–4; Hosea 11:8 (first part).**
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“The warning sounds down along the line to us in this generation. Are you, O careless heart, a fruitless tree in the Lord’s vineyard? Shall the words of doom ere long be spoken of you? How long have you received His gifts? How long has He watched and waited for a return of love? Planted in His vineyard, under the watchful care of the gardener, what privileges are yours! How often has the tender gospel message thrilled your heart! You have taken the name of Christ, you are outwardly a member of the church which is His body, and yet you are conscious of no living connection with the great heart of love. The tide of His life does not flow through you. The sweet graces of His character, ‘the fruits of the Spirit,’ are not seen in your life.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 216.

- b. **What sentence must finally be passed upon those who do not respond to God’s care and labor for them? Hosea 4:17; Revelation 3:16.**
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“The heart that does not respond to divine agencies becomes hardened until it is no longer susceptible to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Then it is that the word is spoken, ‘Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?’ (Luke 13:7).”—*Ibid.*, p. 218.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Why did the Jews speak of calamity with secret satisfaction?**
2. **How must we change in order to be regenerated, fruitful trees in God’s garden?**
3. **When we fail to bear fruit in our life, how does this affect the world around us? What reflection does this have upon our religion?**
4. **How does the manner in which we use the powers given to us by God affect the fruit we bear in our life?**
5. **Even though we may be a member of the church, how can we be a fruitless tree in the Lord’s vineyard?**

Without a Wedding Garment

“And he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless” (Matthew 22:12).

“The parable of the wedding garment opens before us a lesson of the highest consequence. By the marriage is represented the union of humanity with divinity; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 307.

Suggested Reading: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 307–319.

Sunday

May 20

1. INVITED TO A ROYAL WEDDING

a. In the parable of the wedding garment, by whose authority is the invitation sent forth? What is the response? Matthew 22:2, 3.

b. How was the king's invitation treated the second time? Matthew 22:4–6.

“In this parable [of the wedding garment], as in that of the great supper, are illustrated the gospel invitation, its rejection by the Jewish people, and the call of mercy to the Gentiles. But on the part of those who reject the invitation, this parable brings to view a deeper insult and a more dreadful punishment. The call to the feast is a king's invitation. It proceeds from one who is vested with power to command. It confers high honor. Yet the honor is unappreciated. The king's authority is despised.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 307.

c. What did the king now command to be done to those who had despised his invitation? Matthew 22:7.

2. SEEKING GUESTS

- a. **Who was then invited to the marriage feast? Matthew 22:8–10. What does this call tell us about those who accept the gospel invitation? Matthew 7:21; James 1:22; John 3:5.**
-

“The class first bidden could not afford, they thought, to sacrifice any worldly advantage for the sake of attending the king’s banquet. And of those who accepted the invitation, there were some who thought only of benefiting themselves. They came to share the provisions of the feast, but had no desire to honor the king.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 309.

“We must not be overwhelmed because good and bad are gathered into the church. Judas was numbered among the disciples. He had every advantage a man could have; but although he heard the truth, and listened to the principles so plainly laid down, Christ knew that he did not receive the truth. He did not eat the truth. It did not become part of himself. His old habits constantly asserted themselves. But Christ did not take forcible means to cut Judas away from the disciples.

“There is a time coming when those who have joined the church, but have not joined Christ, will be manifest.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 7, 1899.

- b. **What happened when the king came in to the feast to inspect the guests? Matthew 22:11.**
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“For every guest at the feast there had been provided a wedding garment. This garment was a gift from the king. By wearing it the guests showed their respect for the giver of the feast. But one man was clothed in his common citizen dress. . . . The garment provided for him at great cost he disdained to wear. Thus he insulted his lord.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 309.

- c. **What did the king say to the man who was without a wedding garment? Matthew 22:12–14.**
-

“Many hear the invitation of mercy, are tested and proved; but few are sealed with the seal of the living God. Few will humble themselves as a little child, that they may enter the kingdom of heaven.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 50.

3. A WORK OF EXAMINATION

- a. What is represented by the examination of the guests? Daniel 7:9, 10.
-

“By the king’s examination of the guests at the feast is represented a work of judgment. The guests at the gospel feast are those who profess to serve God, those whose names are written in the book of life. But not all who profess to be Christians are true disciples. Before the final reward is given, it must be decided who are fitted to share the inheritance of the righteous. This decision must be made prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven; for when He comes, His reward is with Him, ‘to give every man according as his work shall be’ (Revelation 22:12). Before His coming, then, the character of every man’s work will have been determined, and to every one of Christ’s followers the reward will have been apportioned according to his deeds.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 310.

- b. As this parable clearly has reference to the ongoing investigative judgment, what is represented by the invitation of the king? Revelation 3:20, 21. What do many say by their actions? Verse 17.
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“The man who came to the feast without a wedding garment represents the condition of many in our world today. They profess to be Christians and lay claim to the blessings and privileges of the gospel; yet they feel no need of a transformation of character. They have never felt true repentance for sin. They do not realize their need of Christ or exercise faith in Him. They have not overcome their hereditary or cultivated tendencies to wrongdoing. Yet they think that they are good enough in themselves, and they rest upon their own merits instead of trusting in Christ. Hearers of the word, they come to the banquet, but they have not put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 315.

“Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God or through His messengers is a knock at the door of the heart. It is the voice of Jesus asking for entrance. With every knock unheeded, the disposition to open becomes weaker. The impressions of the Holy Spirit if disregarded today, will not be as strong tomorrow. The heart becomes less impressible, and lapses into a perilous unconsciousness of the shortness of life, and of the great eternity beyond.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 489, 490.

4. POSSESSING A HEAVENLY GARMENT

- a. **What constitutes the wedding garment which all must have if they want to have a part in the marriage feast in heaven? Revelation 19:7, 8.**

“By the wedding garment in the parable is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ’s true followers will possess. . . . It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour. . . .

“This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His humanity wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 310, 311.

- b. **How do we obtain a righteous character? Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 5:6.**

“When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ.”—*Ibid.*, p. 314.

“Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

- c. **What does righteousness involve? 1 John 3:7, 24; John 15:5.**

“Righteousness is right doing, and it is by their deeds that all will be judged. Our characters are revealed by what we do. The works show whether the faith is genuine. . . .

“We may believe that the name of Jesus is the only name under heaven whereby man may be saved, and yet we may not through faith make Him our personal Saviour. It is not enough to believe the theory of truth. It is not enough to make a profession of faith in Christ and have our names registered on the church roll. ‘He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.’ ‘Hereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments’ (1 John 3:24; 2:3). This is the genuine evidence of conversion. Whatever our profession, it amounts to nothing unless Christ is revealed in works of righteousness.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 312, 313.

5. A BLESSED EXPERIENCE

- a. Describe the glorious experience of those who accept Christ's offer as recorded in Revelation 3:18. Revelation 19:8, 9.

"The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life, enrolled among the faithful of all ages. . . .

"These [faithful ones] are they that stand upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having the Father's name written in their foreheads. They sing the new song before the throne, that song which no man can learn save the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 591.

- b. What experience of Christ, while He was on this earth, is possible for us to have today? Psalm 40:8; John 15:10.

"By [Christ's] perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can we honor our King as He invites us to unite our humanity with His divinity?
2. How are we sometimes like those who accepted the king's invitation but had the wrong motive?
3. How does Jesus knock at the door of the heart, and what does He desire?
4. What is symbolized by the wedding garment, and how do we know if we are wearing it?
5. What does it mean to be clothed with Christ's righteousness?

First Sabbath Offering for a chapel in Thoothukudi, India

India is a country with a population of around 1.3 billion and the seventh largest by geographical area. It consists of twenty-nine states and seven union territories. India's coastline stretches for over seven thousand kilometers.

Thoothukudi is a major port city which lies on the eastern coastline, close to Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin), which is the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent.

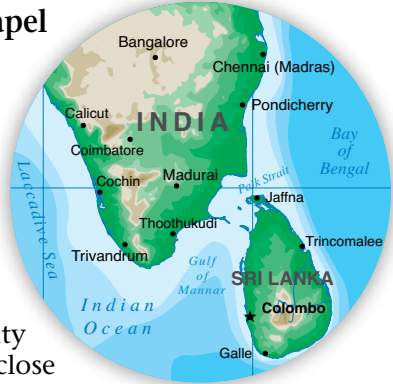
Sometime in 2007, the brethren from South India Union Mission visited some Adventist brethren with their families who had shown an immense interest in the Present Truth. After hearing and studying the message of Revival and Reformation, eleven souls united with the Reform Movement. The work has been growing, and the message of Reformation has reached some other neighboring villages.

The brethren in Thoothukudi have been worshipping in a rented place. Despite our financial constraints, we were able to acquire a parcel of land where we could erect a monument for the Lord. Now to realize the aspiration of building a chapel we need the help of our worldwide children of God.

We, therefore, earnestly appeal to all our brothers and sisters and friends from around the world, who appreciate the message of Reformation and live by it, to be extra generous in your offering for this building project. We also ask for your earnest prayers so that this project may be completed for the honor and glory of God.

“Upon all who believe, God has placed the burden of raising up churches, for the express purpose of educating men and women to use their entrusted capabilities for the benefit of the world, employing the means He has lent for His glory. He has made human beings His stewards. Gladly and generously they are to use the means in their possession for the advancement of righteousness and truth. They are to employ His entrusted talents in building up His work and enlarging His kingdom.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 315.

While we thank our worldwide body of brethren in advance for opening up your hearts to give freely and generously for this church building, we also pray that the Lord would bountifully bless all that your storehouses may be full and your health sound. Amen.



Your brethren from Thoothukudi

The Rich Man and Lazarus

“And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

“Those who are poor in this world’s goods, yet who trust in God and are patient in suffering, will one day be exalted above those who now hold the highest positions the world can give but who have not surrendered their life to God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 260.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 260–271.

Sunday

May 27

1. DESTINY FIXED AT DEATH

- a. **What parable illustrates the truth that a person’s future is fixed at death according to his or her manner of life? Explain the difference between the two men, and tell the lesson we can learn. Luke 16:19–21.**

“In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Christ shows that in this life men decide their eternal destiny. . . . If men waste their opportunities in self-pleasing, they cut themselves off from everlasting life. No after-probation will be granted them. By their own choice they have fixed an impassable gulf between them and their God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 260.

- b. **What eventually happened to both the beggar and the rich man? Luke 16:22.**

“The poor man had suffered day by day, but he had patiently and quietly endured. In the course of time he died and was buried. There was no one to mourn for him; but by his patience in suffering he had witnessed for Christ, he had endured the test of his faith, and at his death he is represented as being carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.”—*Ibid.*, p. 262.

2. CORRECTING ERRONEOUS VIEWS

- a. **Though erroneous, what belief held by many of his hearers did Jesus use to teach important truths? In the destiny of the rich man, what truth was Jesus teaching? Luke 16:23, 24.**
-

“In this parable Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ’s words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed His parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions. He held up before His hearers a mirror wherein they might see themselves in their true relation to God. He used the prevailing opinion to convey the idea He wished to make prominent to all—that no man is valued for his possessions; for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord. A misuse of these gifts will place him below the poorest and most afflicted man who loves God and trusts in Him.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 263.

- b. **What does the Bible teach in regard to the state of the body and soul in death? Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6; Psalm 146:2–4; John 11:11.**
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“My mind had often been disturbed by its efforts to reconcile the immediate reward or punishment of the dead with the undoubted fact of a future resurrection and judgment. If at death the soul entered upon eternal happiness or misery, where was the need of a resurrection of the poor moldering body?

“But this new and beautiful faith taught me the reason why inspired writers had dwelt so much upon the resurrection of the body; it was because the entire being was slumbering in the grave. I could now clearly perceive the fallacy of our former position on this question.”—*Life Sketches*, pp. 49, 50.

- c. **What is the response of the figurative Abraham to the appeal of the rich man? Luke 16:25.**
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“What are the sufferings of this present life, compared with the final eternal weight of glory?”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 10, 1885.

3. AN OPPORTUNITY LOST FOREVER

- a. **What additional difficulty was stated by Abraham in this illustrative conversation? Luke 16:26.**
-

“It is a solemn thing to die, but a far more solemn thing to live. Every thought and word and deed of our lives will meet us again. What we make of ourselves in probationary time, that we must remain to all eternity. Death brings dissolution to the body, but makes no change in the character. The coming of Christ does not change our characters; it only fixes them forever beyond all change.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 466.

- b. **What concern hitherto unheeded is voiced by the rich man? Luke 16:27, 28. Has God left anything undone in providing for our salvation?**
-

“When the rich man solicited additional evidence for his brothers, he was plainly told that should this evidence be given, they would not be persuaded. His request cast a reflection on God. It was as if the rich man had said, If you had more thoroughly warned me, I should not now be here. Abraham in his answer to this request is represented as saying, Your brothers have been sufficiently warned. Light has been given them, but they would not see; truth has been presented to them, but they would not hear.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 264, 265.

“When God gave Christ to our world, He gave in this one gift all the treasures of heaven. He held back nothing. He can do no more than He has done to bring men to repentance. He has no means held in reserve for their salvation.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 17, 1901.

- c. **As we view the condition of this world today, what sobering thoughts should we consider? James 4:14; 2 Corinthians 6:2.**
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“God . . . bears with men until the last resource for leading them to repentance is exhausted. But there are limits to His forbearance.”—*Ibid.*

“Come now, while mercy lingers; come with confession, come with contrition of soul, and God will abundantly pardon. Do not dare to slight another opportunity.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 353.

4. AMPLE WARNING NEGLECTED

- a. **What testimony did the Jewish nation first refuse, and what further evidence did Jesus say they would ignore? Luke 16:29–31; John 5:46, 47.**
-

“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead’ (Luke 16:31). These words were proved true in the history of the Jewish nation. Christ’s last and crowning miracle was the raising of Lazarus of Bethany, after he had been dead four days. The Jews were given this wonderful evidence of the Saviour’s divinity, but they rejected it. Lazarus rose from the dead and bore his testimony before them, but they hardened their hearts against all evidence, and even sought to take his life (John 12:9–11).”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 265.

- b. **What spiritual blessings were given to the Jews? Romans 9:3–5. What were many of them guilty of doing with their blessings? Luke 12:21.**
-

“When Christ gave the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, there were many in the Jewish nation in the pitiable condition of the rich man, using the Lord’s goods for selfish gratification, preparing themselves to hear the sentence, ‘Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting’ (Daniel 5:27). The rich man was favored with every temporal and spiritual blessing, but he refused to cooperate with God in the use of these blessings.”—*Ibid.*, p. 267.

- c. **How can we be in danger of making the same mistake? Proverbs 14:31; Zechariah 7:10.**
-

“If God gives us much of this world’s goods, it is not that we may selfishly hoard them, or that we may crave for more, but that we may freely impart to those not so richly blessed. Nothing so refreshes the spirit as giving gladly and willingly of the blessings God has so freely given us. The life of the soul is revived by the sight of the good thus accomplished, and by a sense that a conscientious use has been made of the Lord’s goods.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 27, 1902.

“The same spirit of sacrifice which purchased salvation for us will dwell in the hearts of all who become partakers of the heavenly gift.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 278.

5. DANGER IN SELF-CONFIDENCE

- a. **What self-satisfied confidence was held by God's favored people in the time of Christ? John 8:33. When did they understand His warning?**
-

"When calamity came upon Jerusalem, when starvation and suffering of every kind came upon the people, they remembered these words of Christ and understood the parable. They had brought their suffering upon themselves by their neglect to let their God-given light shine forth to the world."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 269.

- b. **What similar deception affects the Laodiceans? Revelation 3:16, 17.**
-

"Today there is a class in our world who are self-righteous. They are not gluttons, they are not drunkards, they are not infidels; but they desire to live for themselves, not for God. He is not in their thoughts; therefore they are classed with unbelievers. Were it possible for them to enter the gates of the city of God, they could have no right to the tree of life, for when God's commandments were laid before them with all their binding claims they said, No. They have not served God here; therefore they would not serve Him hereafter. They could not live in His presence, and they would feel that any place was preferable to heaven.

"To learn of Christ means to receive His grace, which is His character. But those who do not appreciate and utilize the precious opportunities and sacred influences granted them on earth, are not fitted to take part in the pure devotion of heaven."—*Ibid.*, pp. 270, 271.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What lesson was taught in this parable about the lives of the two men?**
2. **How did the reply of Abraham reveal the rich man's problem?**
3. **What did the request of the rich man concerning his brothers imply?**
4. **What does this parable teach about present opportunities?**
5. **Self-righteous church members are not infidels. Why then are they classed with unbelievers?**

The Good Samaritan

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

“In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds, or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 497.

Suggested Readings: *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 376–389.
Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 21–24.

Sunday

June 3

1. CONDITIONS TO RECEIVING ETERNAL LIFE

- a. How did Jesus answer the lawyer's question regarding how to inherit eternal life? Luke 10:25, 26.

“The conditions of salvation are ever the same. Life, eternal life, is for all who will obey God's law. Perfect obedience, revealed in thought, word, and deed, is as essential now as when the lawyer asked Christ, ‘What shall I do to inherit eternal life?’”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 299.

- b. Which law did the lawyer mention, and how did Jesus reply? Luke 10:27, 28.

“The lawyer was not satisfied with the position and works of the Pharisees. He had been studying the scriptures with a desire to learn their real meaning. He had a vital interest in the matter, and he asked in sincerity, ‘What shall I do?’ (Luke 10:25). In his answer as to the requirements of the law, he passed by all the mass of ceremonial and ritualistic precepts. For these he claimed no value, but presented the two great principles on which hang all the law and the prophets.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 377.

2. NEGLECTING OUR NEIGHBOR

- a. **What question was later asked by the lawyer, which prompted Jesus to tell a parable? Luke 10:29. Who is our neighbor today?**
-

“Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God. . . .

“Our neighbors are not merely our associates and special friends; they are not simply those who belong to our church, or who think as we do. Our neighbors are the whole human family. We are to do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. We are to give to the world an exhibition of what it means to carry out the law of God. We are to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves.”—*My Life Today*, p. 232.

- b. **What attitude do many have today, which shows that they do not love their neighbors? Who are they copying? Genesis 4:9.**
-

“There has been too much of a spirit to ask, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ Said the angel: ‘Yea, *thou art* thy brother’s keeper. Thou shouldest have a watchful care for thy brother, be interested for his welfare, and cherish a kind, loving spirit toward him. Press together, press together.’ God designed that man should be openhearted and honest, without affectation, meek, humble, with simplicity. This is the principle of heaven; God ordered it so. But poor, frail man has sought out something different—to follow his own way, and carefully attend to his own self-interest.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 113, 114.

- c. **How do we know that this is not a godly attitude? Romans 14:7.**
-

“Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil. Our influence is tending upward or downward; it is felt, acted upon, and to a greater or less degree reproduced by others.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 133.

“By our unconscious influence others may be encouraged and strengthened, or they may be discouraged and repelled from Christ and the truth.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 120.

3. THE TRUE NEIGHBOR REVEALED

- a. **Where did the man in the parable fall among thieves? Who passed by on the side of the road and left him half dead? Luke 10:30–32.**
-

“In journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho, the traveler had to pass through a portion of the wilderness of Judea. The road led down a wild, rocky ravine, which was infested with robbers, and was often the scene of violence. It was here that the traveler was attacked, stripped of all that was valuable, and left half dead by the wayside. As he lay thus, a priest came that way; he saw the man lying wounded and bruised, weltering in his own blood; but he left him without rendering any assistance. He ‘passed by on the other side.’ Then a Levite appeared. Curious to know what had happened, he stopped and looked at the sufferer. He was convicted of what he ought to do, but it was not an agreeable duty. He wished that he had not come that way so that he would not have seen the wounded man. He persuaded himself that the case was no concern of his, and he too ‘passed by on the other side.’”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 379.

- b. **Who had mercy on the wounded man, and what did he do for him? Luke 10:33–35.**
-

“The priest and the Levite both professed piety, but the Samaritan showed that he was truly converted. It was no more agreeable for him to do the work than for the priest and the Levite, but in spirit and works he proved himself to be in harmony with God. . . .

“The priest and Levite neglected the very work the Lord had enjoined on them, leaving a hated and despised Samaritan to minister to one of their own countrymen.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 380, 381.

- c. **Who did the lawyer acknowledge to be the true neighbor? How did he answer? Luke 10:36, 37.**
-

“The lawyer found in the lesson nothing that he could criticize. His prejudice in regard to Christ was removed. But he had not overcome his national dislike sufficiently to give credit to the Samaritan by name.”—*Ibid.*, p. 380.

4. OVERCOMING PREJUDICE

- a. **Why did the lawyer answer the way he did? What attitude did the Jews have toward the Samaritans? John 4:9; 8:48, 49.**
-

“The great difference between the Jews and the Samaritans was a difference in religious belief, a question as to what constitutes true worship. The Pharisees would say nothing good of the Samaritans, but poured their bitterest curses upon them. So strong was the antipathy between the Jews and the Samaritans that to the Samaritan woman it seemed a strange thing for Christ to ask her for a drink.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 380, 381.

- b. **What was Jesus’ example in ministering to those who were from different nationalities? Acts 10:38. What can we learn from this teaching? Matthew 23:8 (last part).**
-

“During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to all mankind. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 19.

“No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 386.

- c. **How did the disciples later show that they had overcome their prejudice against other nations? Acts 8:25; 17:24–27.**
-

“Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God’s kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour’s love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us’ (Acts 17:26, 27).”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 20.

5. REACHING OUT TO THOSE IN NEED

- a. What does Jesus want us to learn from the parable of the good Samaritan? Luke 10:36, 37; Romans 12:20, 21.
-

“We may claim to be followers of Christ, we may claim to believe every truth in the word of God; but this will do our neighbor no good unless our belief is carried into our daily life. Our profession may be as high as heaven, but it will save neither ourselves nor our fellow men unless we are Christians. A right example will do more to benefit the world than all our profession.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 383.

- b. How does He want us to help those around us? Matthew 7:12; 10:8.
-

“We should anticipate the sorrows, the difficulties, the troubles of others. We should enter into the joys and cares of both high and low, rich and poor. ‘Freely ye have received,’ Christ says, ‘freely give’ (Matthew 10:8). All around us are poor, tried souls that need sympathizing words and helpful deeds.”—*Ibid.*, p. 386.

“Never should we pass by one suffering soul without seeking to impart to him the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God. . . .

“Upon your faithfulness in this work not only the well-being of others but your own eternal destiny depends.”—*Ibid.*, p. 388.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How far-reaching should our obedience to God’s law be?
2. Who is our neighbor? What is our obligation to him or her?
3. The priest and the Levite made a high profession of their faith. What did the Samaritan have which the priest and the Levite failed to have?
4. How did Jesus begin to break down the walls of prejudice in His day?
5. If we are true Christians, how will we seek to help our fellowmen?

When to Forgive

“But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15).

“Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God’s pardoning grace. In God’s forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner’s soul, and from him to the souls of others.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 251.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 243–251.

Sunday

June 10

1. WE MUST BE LONG-SUFFERING

- a. **What lesson was Jesus trying to teach Peter regarding his view of forgiveness? Matthew 18:21, 22.**

“The rabbis limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses. Peter, carrying out, as he supposed, the teaching of Christ, thought to extend it to seven, the number signifying perfection. But Christ taught that we are never to become weary of forgiving.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 243.

- b. **How should we treat those who injure us? Why? Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1.**

“Too often when wrongs are committed again and again, and the wrongdoer confesses his fault, the injured one becomes weary, and thinks he has forgiven quite enough. . . .

“If your brethren err, you are to forgive them. . . . You should not say. . . I do not think they feel their confession. What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart?. . . And not only seven times, but seventy times seven—just as often as God forgives you.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 249, 250.

2. A GREAT DEBT FORGIVEN

a. In the parable of the debtors, what fate was about to befall a servant who owed a great debt to his king? Matthew 18:23–25.

b. How did the king respond to the servant's plea for mercy? Matthew 18:26, 27.

“The pardon granted by this king represents a divine forgiveness of all sin. Christ is represented by the king, who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant. Man was under the condemnation of the broken law. He could not save himself, and for this reason Christ came to this world, clothed His divinity with humanity, and gave His life, the just for the unjust. He gave Himself for our sins, and to every soul He freely offers the blood-bought pardon. ‘With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption’ (Psalm 130:7).”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 244, 245.

c. As we have received abundant forgiveness from Christ for our own sins, what obligation does this pardon place us under? 1 John 4:11; Matthew 10:8.

“There are no sins [God] will not forgive in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sinner's only hope, and if he rests here in sincere faith, he is sure of pardon and that full and free. There is only one channel and that is accessible to all, and through that channel a rich and abundant forgiveness awaits the penitent, contrite soul and the darkest sins are forgiven.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 102.

“We ourselves owe everything to God's free grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ. Let this grace be revealed to others.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 250.

“Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God's pardoning grace. In God's forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner's soul, and from him to the souls of others. The tenderness and mercy that Christ has revealed in His own precious life will be seen in those who become sharers of His grace.”—*Ibid.*, p. 251.

3. CHERISHING AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

- a. **How did the servant who had been forgiven a very large debt treat one of his fellow servants who owed him but a small sum? Matthew 18:28–30.**
-

“In the parable, when the debtor pleaded for delay, with the promise, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,’ the sentence was revoked. The whole debt was canceled. And he was soon given an opportunity to follow the example of the master who had forgiven him. Going out, he met a fellow servant who owed him a small sum. He had been forgiven ten thousand talents; the debtor owed him a hundred pence. But he who had been so mercifully treated, dealt with his fellow laborer in an altogether different manner. His debtor made an appeal similar to that which he himself had made to the king, but without a similar result. He who had so recently been forgiven was not tender-hearted and pitiful. The mercy shown him he did not exercise in dealing with his fellowservant.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 245.

- b. **What did the king do when he heard about this merciless action? Matthew 18:31–34. What lesson does this parable teach us?**
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“He who refuses to forgive is thereby casting away his own hope of pardon.”—*Ibid.*, p. 247.

- c. **What pattern of forgiveness did Jesus leave us in His own life? 1 Peter 2:23; Luke 23:34. How do we often fail in this regard?**
-

“We shall need to have the love of Christ, that we may not cherish an unforgiving spirit. Let us not think that unless those who have injured us confess their wrongs, we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. We should not accumulate our grievances, holding them to our hearts until the one we think guilty has humbled his heart by repentance and confession. . . . However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries, but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God, so must we pardon those who have done evil to us.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 144.

4. THE CONDITION OF RECEIVING FORGIVENESS

- a. What principle of forgiveness does Jesus present in the prayer He taught His disciples? Matthew 6:12, 14, 15. How only can we truthfully pray this prayer?
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“A great blessing is here asked upon conditions. We ourselves state these conditions. We ask that the mercy of God toward us may be measured by the mercy which we extend to others. Christ declares that this is the rule by which the Lord will deal with us: ‘If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses’ (Matthew 6:14, 15). Wonderful terms! but how little are they understood or heeded. One of the most common sins, and one that is attended with most pernicious results, is the indulgence of an unforgiving spirit. How many will cherish animosity or revenge and then bow before God and ask to be forgiven as they forgive. Surely they can have no true sense of the import of this prayer or they would not dare take it upon their lips. We are dependent upon the pardoning mercy of God every day and every hour; how then can we cherish bitterness and malice toward our fellow sinners!”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 328.

- b. What can we expect if we manifest an unforgiving spirit toward others, and why? Matthew 6:15; 18:34, 35.
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“We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own. Wherefore Christ says, ‘With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again’ (Matthew 7:2).”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 251.

- c. How can we show others true forgiveness? Ephesians 4:32.
-

“Let the tenderness and mercy that Jesus has revealed in His own precious life be an example to us of the manner in which we should treat our fellow beings.”—*My Life Today*, p. 235.

5. LOVE INSPIRES FORGIVENESS

- a. What exchange did Christ make in our behalf? 1 Peter 3:18.
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“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed’ (Isaiah 53:5).”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

- b. What does He ask us to give in return? John 13:34.
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“Often have you needed the forgiveness of Jesus. You have been constantly dependent upon His compassion and love. Yet have you not failed to manifest toward others the spirit which Christ has exercised toward you? Have you felt a burden for the one whom you saw venturing into forbidden paths? Have you kindly admonished him? Have you wept for him and prayed with him and for him? Have you shown by words of tenderness and kindly acts that you love him and desire to save him?”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 610.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What should be our attitude when our brother or sister injures us several times and then say they are sorry? Why?
2. What must we learn to bear with in others? If we fail to bear with our brothers and sisters, what does this say about ourselves?
3. If those who have injured us do not confess what they have done, what should we do? Why?
4. What do we lack when we fail to forgive others?
5. How can we show the compassion and forgiveness of Christ toward those who have gone astray?

Actions Speak Louder Than Words

“Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay” (Ecclesiastes 5:5).

“When the call comes, ‘Go work today in My vineyard,’ do not refuse the invitation. ‘Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts’ (Hebrews 4:7). It is unsafe to delay obedience. You may never hear the invitation again.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 281.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 272–283.

Sunday

June 17

1. A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

- a. What question did the chief priests and elders ask Christ? Matthew 21:23.

“The rulers [of Israel] had before them the evidences of [Jesus] Messiahship. They now decided to demand no sign of His authority, but to draw out some admission or declaration by which He might be condemned. . . .

“They expected Him to claim that His authority was from God. Such an assertion they intended to deny.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 593.

- b. In return, what question did Christ put before them, and what answer did He receive? Matthew 21:24–27.

“In His contest with the rabbis, it was not Christ’s purpose to humiliate His opponents. He was not glad to see them in a hard place. He had an important lesson to teach. He had mortified His enemies by allowing them to be entangled in the net they had spread for Him. Their acknowledged ignorance in regard to the character of John’s baptism gave Him an opportunity to speak, and He improved the opportunity by presenting before them their real position, adding another warning to the many already given.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 594, 595.

2. THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

- a. Through what parable did Christ reveal the secrets of the hearts of the chief priests and elders? Matthew 21:28–31 (first part).
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- b. Who was closer to the kingdom of God than the rulers among the Jews? Matthew 21:31 (last part), 32.
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“Whatsoever is done out of pure love, be it ever so little or contemptible in the sight of men, is wholly fruitful; for God regards more with how much love one worketh than the amount he doeth.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 135.

“It is not the great results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness more than the greatness of the work accomplished.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 510, 511.

- c. How can we be like the older son in the parable of the two sons? 1 John 3:7; James 4:17.
-

“Many today claim to obey the commandments of God, but they have not the love of God in their hearts to flow forth to others. Christ calls them to unite with Him in His work for the saving of the world, but they content themselves with saying, ‘I go, sir.’ They do not go. They do not cooperate with those who are doing God’s service. They are idlers. Like the unfaithful son, they make false promises to God. . . . In profession they claim to be sons of God, but in life and character they deny the relationship. They do not surrender the will to God. They are living a lie.

“The promise of obedience they appear to fulfill when this involves no sacrifice; but when self-denial and self-sacrifice are required, when they see the cross to be lifted, they draw back. Thus the conviction of duty wears away, and known transgression of God’s commandments becomes habit. The ear may hear God’s word, but the spiritual perceptive powers have departed. The heart is hardened, the conscience seared.

“Do not think that because you do not manifest decided hostility to Christ you are doing Him service. We thus deceive our own souls. By withholding that which God has given us to use in His service, be it time or means or any other of His entrusted gifts, we work against Him.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 279, 280.

3. HAVE WE ACCEPTED THE INVITATION?

- a. **By what invitation of the Saviour will many be tested? Matthew 21:28.**
-

“In the command, ‘Go work today in My vineyard,’ the test of sincerity is brought to every soul. Will there be deeds as well as words? Will the one called put to use all the knowledge he has, working faithfully, disinterestedly, for the Owner of the vineyard?”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 281.

- b. **What work does the Lord have for each of us to do? What does this work include? 2 Peter 1:2–7.**
-

“If you cultivate faithfully the vineyard of your soul, God is making you a laborer together with Himself. And you will have a work to do not only for yourself, but for others. In representing the church as the vineyard, Christ does not teach that we are to restrict our sympathies and labors to our own numbers. The Lord’s vineyard is to be enlarged. In all parts of the earth He desires it to be extended. As we receive the instruction and grace of God, we should impart to others a knowledge of how to care for the precious plants. Thus we may extend the vineyard of the Lord. God is watching for evidence of our faith, love, and patience.”—*Ibid.*, p. 282.

- c. **Who is our great example in doing this work? Psalm 40:8.**
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“Consider the life of Christ. Standing at the head of humanity, serving His Father, He is an example of what every son should and may be. The obedience that Christ rendered God requires from human beings today. He served His Father with love, in willingness and freedom. ‘I delight to do Thy will, O My God,’ He declared; ‘yea, Thy law is within My heart’ (Psalm 40:8). Christ counted no sacrifice too great, no toil too hard, in order to accomplish the work which He came to do. At the age of twelve He said, ‘Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?’ (Luke 2:49). He had heard the call, and had taken up the work. ‘My meat,’ He said, ‘is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work’ (John 4:34).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 282, 283.

4. PUTTING OUR UTMOST INTO HIS SERVICE

- a. As we work for Him, to what degree does the Lord want us to surrender ourselves to Him? 1 Thessalonians 5:23.
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“In all our service a full surrender of self is demanded. The smallest duty done in sincerity and self-forgetfulness is more pleasing to God than the greatest work when marred with self-seeking. He looks to see how much of the spirit of Christ we cherish, and how much of the likeness of Christ our work reveals. He regards more the love and faithfulness with which we work than the amount we do.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 402.

“He who truly loves and fears God, striving with a singleness of purpose to do His will, will place his body, his mind, his heart, his soul, his strength, under service to God. . . . Those who are determined to make the will of God their own must serve and please God in everything.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 190.

- b. When is the Lord well pleased? Mark 1:11; John 8:29; 14:21; 15:10.
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“We should not obey the commandments merely to secure heaven, but to please Him who died to save sinners from the penalty of the transgression of the Father’s law. . . . It is a sad resolve to follow Christ as far off as possible, venturing as near the verge of perdition as possible without falling in.”—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 77.

“In every phase of your character building you are to please God. This you may do; for Enoch pleased Him though living in a degenerate age. And there are Enochs in this our day.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 332.

- c. What type of service is an abomination to God? Matthew 15:8, 9.
-

“Some who claim to love Jesus are deceivers and all their religion is lip service. It does not transform the character. It does not reveal the inward working of grace. They do not show that they have ever learned in Christ’s school the lessons of meekness and lowliness of heart. They do not show by life or character that they are wearing Christ’s yoke or lifting Christ’s burdens. They are not reaching the standard given them in God’s Word, but a human standard.”—*This Day With God*, p. 299.

5. THE BLESSINGS OF A FULL COMMITMENT

- a. What wonderful promises are given to those who serve the Lord in deed and in truth? John 14:23; Matthew 7:24, 25.

“Of those who faithfully serve Him the Lord says, ‘They shall be Mine . . . in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him’ (Malachi 3:17).”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 283.

“While we trust in Christ’s saving power, all the arts and wiles of the fallen host can do nothing to harm us. Heavenly angels are constantly with us, guiding and protecting. God has ordained that we shall have His saving power with us, to enable us to do all His will. Let us grasp the promises and cherish them moment by moment. Let us believe that God means just what He says. . . .

“As we lay hold of the power thus placed within our reach, we receive a hope so strong that we can rely wholly upon God’s promises; and laying hold of the possibilities there are in Christ, we become the sons and daughters of God. . . .

“To man is granted the privilege of becoming an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. To those who have been thus exalted, are unfolded the unsearchable riches of Christ, which are of a thousandfold more value than the wealth of the world. Thus, through the merits of Jesus Christ, finite man is elevated to fellowship with God and with His dear Son.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 32.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. While Christ did not intend to humble the rabbis, what was the purpose of His answer to them?
2. What causes us to draw back from service for Christ, like the older son in the parable of the two sons?
3. How can we follow Christ’s example of obedience when He was upon this earth?
4. How only can we be doers of the Word and not just those who render lip service?
5. What is possible for us as we trust in God’s saving power?

Meeting the Bridegroom

“Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh. . . . Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping” (Mark 13:35, 36).

“It is in a crisis that character is revealed. When the earnest voice proclaimed at midnight, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,’ and the sleeping virgins were roused from their slumbers, it was seen who had made preparation for the event. Both parties were taken unawares; but one was prepared for the emergency, and the other was found without preparation.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 412.

Suggested Reading: *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 405–421.

Sunday

June 24

1. A PARABLE FOR OUR DAY

- a. With whom does the Lord compare the kingdom of heaven? Matthew 25:1, 2.

“Christ with His disciples is seated upon the Mount of Olives. The sun has set behind the mountains, and the heavens are curtained with the shades of evening. In full view is a dwelling house lighted up brilliantly as if for some festive scene. The light streams from the openings, and an expectant company wait around, indicating that a marriage procession is soon to appear. . . .

“As Christ sat looking upon the party that waited for the bridegroom, He told His disciples the story of the ten virgins, by their experience illustrating the experience of the church that shall live just before His second coming.

“The two classes of watchers represent the two classes who profess to be waiting for their Lord. They are called virgins because they profess a pure faith.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 405, 406.

- b. What was the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins? Matthew 25:3, 4.

2. DO NOT SLEEP AS DO OTHERS

- a. **What aroused the sleeping virgins? Matthew 25:5, 6. How was their experience repeated by God's people in 1844?**
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“By the tarrying of the bridegroom is represented the passing of the time when the Lord was expected, the disappointment, and the seeming delay. In this time of uncertainty, the interest of the superficial and halfhearted soon began to waver, and their efforts to relax; but those whose faith was based on a personal knowledge of the Bible had a rock beneath their feet, which the waves of disappointment could not wash away.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 394.

- b. **What warning does God give us concerning the times in which we live? Luke 21:36; 1 Peter 4:7.**
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“All we have to do with is this one day. Today we must be faithful to our trust. Today we must love God with all the heart and our neighbor as ourselves. Today we must resist the temptations of the enemy, and through the grace of Christ gain the victory. Thus we shall watch and wait for Christ's coming. Each day we should live as if we knew that this would be our last day on this earth. If we knew that Christ would come tomorrow, would we not crowd into today all the kind words, all the unselfish deeds, that we could?”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 355.

- c. **What can we do to arouse from our sleeping condition? Romans 13:11–14.**
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“We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise. Now the day of God is nearer than when we first believed, and we should be more earnest, more zealous, and fervent than in those early days. Our perils are greater now than then. Souls are more hardened. We need now to be imbued with the spirit of Christ, and we should not rest until we receive it.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 161, 162.

3. THE NEED FOR OIL

- a. **What happened when the virgins awoke and went to trim their lamps? Matthew 25:7–9.**
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“In the parable, all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ’s second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures. All have heard the message of Christ’s near approach and confidently expect His appearing. But as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him,’ many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 408.

- b. **What is represented by the lamps and the oil in the parable? Psalm 119:105; Zechariah 4:1–6. What does it mean to be destitute of the Holy Spirit?**
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“Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed.”—*Ibid.*

- c. **How would you describe the foolish virgins today? 2 Timothy 3:5; Revelation 3:17.**
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“The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit’s working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. . . . They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form.”—*Ibid.*, p. 411.

4. MAKING EXCUSES FOR OUR DEFICIENCIES

- a. What happened while the foolish virgins were separated from the wise virgins to buy oil for their lamps? Matthew 25:10.
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“The ten virgins are watching in the evening of this earth’s history. All claim to be Christians. All have a call, a name, a lamp, and all profess to be doing God’s service. All apparently wait for Christ’s appearing. But five are unready. Five will be found surprised, dismayed, outside the banquet hall.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 412.

“We cannot be ready to meet the Lord by waking when the cry is heard, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom!’ and then gathering up our empty lamps to have them replenished. We cannot keep Christ apart from our lives here, and yet be fitted for His companionship in heaven.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 413, 414.

- b. What did the foolish virgins petition the Lord of the marriage feast to do? Matthew 25:11, 12.
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- c. How do we often react when we fail God, instead of acknowledging our sins and mistakes? What did Saul do, and what was Samuel’s response? 1 Samuel 15:18–22.
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“There is no time to make excuses and blame others for our backslidings; no time now to flatter the soul [that] if circumstances had only been more favorable, how much better, how much easier [it would be] for us to work the works of God. We must tell even those who profess to believe in Christ, that they must cease to offend God by sinful excuses.

“Jesus has provided for every emergency. If they will walk where He leads the way, He will make rough places plain. He, with His experience, will create an atmosphere for the soul. He closes the door and brings the soul into seclusion with God, and the needy soul is to forget everyone and everything, but God. Satan will talk with him, but speak aloud to God and He will drive back the hellish shadow of Satan. With humble, subdued, thankful hearts they will come forth saying, ‘Thy gentleness hath made me great.’”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 336.

5. THE CALL FOR TODAY

- a. What call does God have for us today? What promise does He make along with the call? Malachi 3:7 (last part); Isaiah 44:22; 55:7.
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“Oh, the love, the wondrous love of God! After all our lukewarmness and sins He says, Return unto Me, and I will return unto thee, and will heal all thy backslidings.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 352.

“Those who will now seek the Lord earnestly, humbling their hearts before Him, and forsaking their sins, will, through the sanctification of the truth, be fitted to unite with the members of the royal family, and will see the King in His beauty.”—*This Day With God*, p. 248.

- b. As we heed the call, what message does He give us to proclaim to the world? Isaiah 40:9.
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“The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.

“The light of the Sun of Righteousness is to shine forth in good works—in words of truth and deeds of holiness.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

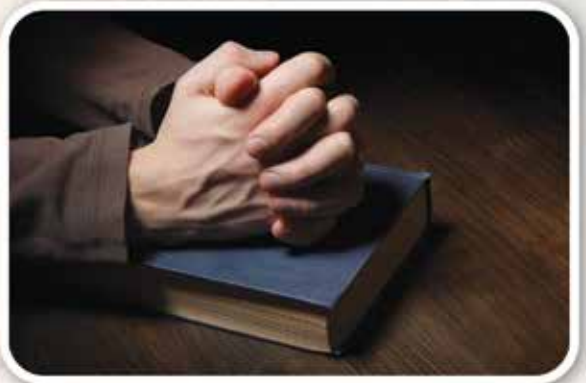
1. Who is represented by the two classes of virgins, and why are they called virgins?
2. What can we do in this waiting and watching time to prepare for Jesus’ soon coming?
3. What work does the Holy Spirit do in the life of those who are like the wise virgins?
4. Instead of blaming circumstances for our defects of character, what can we do instead?
5. How can God use us to give His last message of mercy to the world?

First Sabbath Offerings



APRIL 7
for a sanitarium
in Venezuela
(See p. 4.)

MAY 5
for World Missions
(See p. 25.)



JUNE 2
for a chapel
in Thoothukudi, India
(See p. 46.)