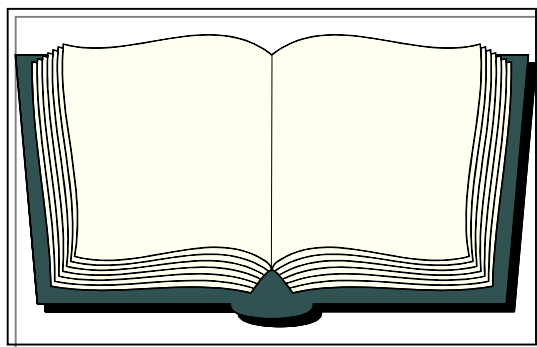


A Study Guide Of

The Parables Of Jesus



**A look at the Parables of Jesus
in
Thirty Five Lessons**

Edited By David Webb

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The Parables of Jesus

Introduction

The word parable is a transliteration of the Greek word "parabole" (para-bow-LAY), and comes from two Greek words, "para" (translated "beside") and "ballein" (translated "to throw"). Literally, the word parable means "to throw beside," or "to place beside, or to place together for the purpose of comparing, or making a comparison." They can usually be identified by the use of the word "like," as in Jesus' statement, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed," or "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven" (Matthew 13:31, 33). In these examples, Jesus was comparing the kingdom of heaven to the attributes or characteristics of a mustard seed and to leaven (yeast). Some have defined the word parable as "a story by which something real in life is used as a means of presenting a moral thought." Others have said a parable "puts the known next to the unknown so that we may learn." They are usually a story or a narrative taken from nature or from everyday human experiences. Perhaps the simplest definition of all is that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

The characters in parables do only those things we would expect anyone to do in the normal course of events – such as a sower going out into a field to sow seed, or a merchant going to the marketplace to find costly pearls. The characters in parables are not superhuman, nor do they perform superhuman feats. The natural events described in parables are also those we would expect to witness in nature – such as seed sown by a sower falling on various kinds of soil, or a mustard seed growing into a large tree, or a drag net bringing all kinds of fish. Parables are not allegories, fables, myths, or proverbs. In fact, there is a major difference between these forms of story-telling. For example, an allegory is simply defined as a figurative application or illustration taken from real historical facts or events – as in the allegory of Abraham's two sons (Galatians 4:22-5:4). On the other hand, Parables speak of supposed events that never really occurred. Fables and myths are stories that are fantasy or larger-than-life. A good example from the Old Testament is the fable of trees that choose a king (Judges 9:8-15). Proverbs are defined as short statements that contain a complete and valuable thought, or short, wise sayings that contain practical truths that are learned by experiences or through observation. Sometimes proverbs and parables are confused, as in the so-called "Parable of the Fig Tree" (Matthew 24:32), which is actually a proverb – a comparative truth learned by experience and observation.

Parables are among the oldest and most common forms of teaching. Even the Old Testament contains many parables. One classic example is Nathan's parable to David about the poor man with one little ewe lamb (2 Samuel 12:1-10). During His earthly ministry, Jesus used this medium of teaching almost constantly, and for a very good purpose. It seems Jesus wanted to teach one part of the crowd that constantly

followed Him, while intentionally preventing the other part from understanding what was being said. In other words, the main purpose for Jesus teaching in parables was to **conceal** the truth from those whose hearts were already prejudiced and hardened.

"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them." But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.'" (Matthew 13:10-17)

The disciples of the Lord were blessed to learn "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" because they had the right attitude toward Jesus and His teaching. But those whose hearts had been hardened by their own wickedness and rebellion were kept from understanding the parables. Essentially, Jesus was attempting to separate truth-seekers from curiosity-seekers. Those of His disciples who were genuinely seeking to know the truth so that they might obey it would ask Jesus, "explain to us the meaning of the parable." He would then explain the meaning of the parable to them privately (cf. Mark 4:33-34). The hearts of these disciples were open and receptive to the truths taught by Jesus. Therefore, Jesus said, "For whoever has [an honest and receptive heart], to him more will be given, and he will have abundance [by virtue of the fact that they will learn and apply the teachings of Jesus in their lives]" (Matthew 13:12a). But those who, for most part, were not interested in obeying the teachings of Jesus would hear the parables, fail to grasp their meaning, and simply brush them off. This is why Jesus added, "but whoever does not have [an honest and receptive heart], even what he has will be taken away from him [by virtue of the fact that he will fail to make application of Jesus' teaching to his life] (Matthew 13:12b). The reason these hearers failed to grasp the meaning of the parables of Jesus is because "the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes **they** have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them." (Matthew 13:15). They had closed their own eyes and ears from receiving the truth.

However, there is another reason why Jesus taught in parables, and that was to **reveal** heavenly truths to just a select group of people – whose hearts were open and receptive to these truths. Jesus was taking the known (earthly truths contained in the parables) and using them to explain the unknown (the greater heavenly truths). Only then would they be able to make a spiritual application or gain spiritual insight from the parables of Jesus. Repeatedly, the Savior said, “the kingdom of heaven is like.” He would then proceed to draw a comparison between the known and the unknown “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”

But there is also another reason why Jesus taught in parables, and that was to **appeal** to the hearer’s sense of justice before they realized the parable applied to them. Nathan did this with David (2 Samuel 12:1-10). But Jesus used this approach often when confronting His enemies. The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-46) is a classic example. Jesus spoke of wicked vinedressers who refused to pay the owner of the vineyard what he was owed. After sending several emissaries to these corrupt vinedressers, the owner sent his son, whom the vinedressers eventually killed out of bitter envy and hatred. As the chief priests and Pharisees began hearing this parable, they would have begun to side against the unjust and wicked vinedressers. But when the parable was concluded, the Scriptures say, “Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.” (Matthew 21:45). Jesus did for these chief priests and Pharisees what Nathan did for David – causing them to agree with the injustice of the situation and the need for righteous judgment against the guilty parties, before they suddenly realized they were the real subject of the parable. So, it can be said that Jesus taught in the form of parables to CONCEAL, to REVEAL, and to APPEAL.

On occasions, Jesus provides the interpretation of the parable. But on other occasions, we are left to interpret the parable for ourselves. When attempting to interpret parables, there are a few extremes to avoid. First, avoid the extreme of reading too much into the parable. Some make the mistake of reading deep spiritual truths **into** every minute detail (eisegesis), rather than drawing simple truths **from** the parable (exegesis). Parables are meant to reveal simple, basic truths to those who are seeking to understand the Lord’s teaching, not to confuse His teaching with a wide range of endless theological speculation. The plain, simple truths contained in parables were meant to be carried away in the mind of the hearer, not examined under a microscope or dissected to reveal every minute detail. Therefore, look for the simplest explanation first – the general theme of the parable, then delve deeper into sub-meanings or sub-themes. Second, avoid the extreme of saying there is just one spiritual truth contained in each parable. However, make certain that the spiritual truths gleaned from the parable are not formulating some new or contradictory doctrine. Truth must agree with truth.

When interpreting a parable of Jesus, there are certain questions that should be asked. First, ask who the intended audience was, or to whom was Jesus speaking? In most

instances, the intended audience will be His disciples. But on other occasions, the audience will range from publicans and sinners, to the scribes and Pharisees. A good way to determine the intended audience is to ask who was learning the most from the teaching of Jesus at the time? Second, ask what did Jesus intend to accomplish by the parable? This may not always be obvious. For example, the Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven are very brief and offer no clear insight into why Jesus taught these parables. But when we understand that the Savior had just spoken two parables to His disciples that were somewhat discouraging (the Parable of the Sower, and the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares), it seems probable that the Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven were spoken to give the disciples encouragement. On other occasions, the purpose of the parable will become obvious. Some were spoken to those who were more concerned about an outward display of religion than they were in the practical application of such (as in the Parable of the Good Samaritan). Others had problems with forgiveness, or with seeing themselves in need of forgiveness, or with the acquisition of wealth. And still others were intent on killing Jesus, even though they knew He was the Son of God, and needed to know that Jesus was well aware of their evil plans. Third, ask what is the lesson to be learned? Every parable has a simple lesson to teach. Some will be more apparent than others. But there is a simple lesson to learn from every parable of Jesus. Don't make the lesson so complex or highly theological. And don't forget that parables were intended to be simple, direct lessons that could easily be remembered, and whose truths would be unforgettable. Look for the "central" truth in every lesson.

Parables contained the "mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:11), as well as "things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). However, these mysteries and secret things are now revealed in the wonderful gospel of Christ. In his closing remarks to the church at Rome, the apostle Paul gives us this promise:

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now has been made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures has been made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith; to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." (Romans 16:25-27).

Enjoy your study of the wonderful teachings of Jesus contained in His many parables. Your knowledge will surely be increased, and your life will truly be enriched.

David Webb

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson One

Defining the Kingdom of Heaven

Introduction:

When Jesus began His ministry, the general theme of His preaching was things concerning the "kingdom of heaven." Matthew says, "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'... And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." (Matthew 4:17, 23). His famous Sermon on the Mount repeatedly described many things about the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3, 10, 19-20; 6:10, 33; 7:21). Therefore, it should not be surprising that the general theme of Jesus' parables was also the kingdom of heaven. In fact, many of His parables begin with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like..." (Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47). Jesus also spoke regarding "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:11). But what did Jesus mean when He spoke of the kingdom of heaven? What is it?

Questions to Consider:

1. Some attempt to make a distinction between the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God." Compare the passages below, and answer the following questions.

Compare	With
Matthew 4:17	Mark 1:14-15
Matthew 5:3	Luke 6:20
Matthew 13:31	Mark 4:30-31

- a. Do these passages indicate a distinction between the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God?" Explain.
- b. Why do you think Matthew used one term exclusively while Mark and Luke used the other to describe what appears to be the same thing?

2. What does the term "kingdom" mean (See: Luke 17:21; Matthew 6:10)?

3. From John 18:36, what is the "nature" of the kingdom – physical or spiritual?

4. How is the "kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God" manifested today (See: Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 1:4-9)?

5. In one sense, the "kingdom of heaven" and the "kingdom of God" are both PRESENT, but in another sense, they are both FUTURE.
 - a. In what way is the "kingdom of heaven" PRESENT (See: Colossians 1:12-14; Revelation 1:4-9)?

 - b. In what way is the "kingdom of heaven" FUTURE (See: 1 Corinthians 15:24; 2 Peter 3:13; Matthew 7:21-23)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson Two

The Parable of the Sower

(Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15)

Introduction:

Even though Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, He didn't always find a receptive audience. And although His miracles and other mighty works which He performed were unmistakably performed by divine power, He was still rejected. Some thought Jesus performed these miracles by the power of Satan. While the people of Jesus' day had ears to hear, their ears had become hard of hearing, and even though they had eyes to see, their eyes had become blinded to the truth. To illustrate to His disciples that not everyone will be receptive to the message of the good news, Jesus taught this parable.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.
2. Who is the sower, even though the sower is not specifically mentioned (Compare with: Matthew 13:37)?
3. What is the seed (See: Matthew 13:19a)?
4. Describe the first kind of soil mentioned in the parable (the "wayside").

- a. What or who is represented by the birds (See: Luke 8:12)?

5. Describe the second kind of soil mentioned in the parable (the "stony places").

6. Describe the third kind of soil mentioned in the parable (the seed that fell "among the thorns").
 - a. Explain how seed falling among thorns is like those troubled by "the cares of this world" (Matthew 13:22b).

 - b. Explain how seed falling among thorns is like those troubled by "the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22c).

 - c. Explain how seed falling among thorns is like those troubled by "the pleasures of life" (Luke 8:14).

7. Describe the fourth kind of soil mentioned in the parable (the "good ground").

8. What kind of fruit are Christians supposed to bear?

9. What does it mean that not all bear the same amount of harvest – “some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Three

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

Introduction:

From the Parable of the Sower, Jesus taught His disciples that not everyone would accept the Word of the kingdom the same way. Some would have hearts completely hardened against receiving the Word. Others would receive it, but persecutions or concerns over matters in life would keep the Word from growing properly and producing fruit. This meant that only a minority of those who heard the Word and obeyed it would eventually be fruitful. In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, Jesus also illustrated this truth, but goes one step further to show the role Satan will have in attempting to contaminate the kingdom with false teachers and false doctrines.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. Read the parable carefully and answer the following questions:
 - a. Who is the sower and what kind of seed does He sow (Matthew 13:37)?

 - b. What does the field represent (Matthew 13:38)?

 - c. What or who are represented by the "good seed" (Matthew 13:38)?

 - d. What or who are represented by the "tares" (Matthew 13:38)?

 - e. Who is the "enemy" (Matthew 13:39)?

 - f. Who are the "reapers" (Matthew 13:41)?

3. When does Jesus say the problem of the tares will be addressed, and why (Matthew 13:41)?

4. What happens to the tares and what happens to the "righteous" (Matthew 13:42-43)?

5. What does this parable teach about the longsuffering of Christ?

6. Does this parable mean the church doesn't need to worry about discipline (withdrawing from those who stubbornly refuse to repent of public sins)? Explain your answer in light of Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

7. The angels will gather two classes of people "out of His kingdom." Explain each.
 - a. Those who "offend" (See: Matthew 18:6-7; 1 Corinthians 8:11-13; 10:31-11:1; Romans 16:17-18; also see Romans 14:13, 19-21).

 - b. Those who "practice lawlessness" (See: Matthew 7:21-23; 2 John 9).

8. What is the punishment waiting for the wicked? Explain.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

- b. Mark 4:28b?
-
- 4. What eventually follows the growth of the seed (Mark 4:29)? Explain what this means.

 - 5. In comparing the Parable of the Sower with the Parable of the Growing Seed, which parable seems to emphasize human responsibility and which seems to emphasize divine power within the Word? Explain your answer.

 - 6. From the following passages, what can the seed do for us?
 - a. 1 Peter 1:22-25; James 1:18.

 - b. 1 Peter 2:1-2.

 - c. James 1:21

 - 7. What do the following passages tell us about how we are to receive the "seed" (the Word) in our lives (Luke 8:15; Acts 17:11; James 1:21; 1 Peter 2:1-2)?

 - 8. This parable teaches us that the real power to change the lives of men and women lies within the seed (the Word), and not within the one who sows the seed. However, there are some things that we need to do. Explain the two actions described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Five

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

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

Introduction:

To give encouragement to His disciples, Jesus taught parables that illustrate the fact that the kingdom of heaven may start small, but is destined for remarkable growth. To teach this encouraging lesson, Jesus used the Parable of the Growing Seed, the Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the Parable of the Leaven. While there are many similarities, there are also subtle differences between these parables.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. What is particular about mustard seeds?

3. On another occasion, Jesus used the mustard seed to describe a person's faith. Explain how mustard seed was used in that example (Matthew 17:14-21).

4. Compare the stone in the prophecy of Daniel (Daniel 2:31-45, esp. verse 35), with the mustard seed in this parable of Jesus. What are each teaching?

5. Did the church begin as Jesus said it would (See: Acts 2:41-42; 4:4; 6:7; 9:31; 21:20)?

6. The mustard seed grew into a tree so that “the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” What does this mean regarding the church?

7. Why isn’t the church growing today?

Consider the mathematical possibilities of church growth. Beginning with just 20 disciples, and each converting just one person a year, and each convert doing the same, here is how the church could grow.

At the End of Year	Total Number of Disciples
1	40
5	640
10	20,480
15	655,360
20	20,971,520
25	1,342,177,280

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Six

The Parable of the Leaven

(Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)

Introduction:

In the Parable of the Growing Seed, Jesus showed His disciples the marvelous power that was contained in the Word of God to convict and convert the sinner and bring a bountiful harvest. In the Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus taught that the kingdom will grow despite its small beginning. Since Jesus had just taught parables which show that not everyone will hear the Word of God, and Satan would do his best to undermine the efforts of those who faithfully followed the Lord, the disciples may have been discouraged. To give them encouragement Jesus taught parables showing the kingdom is destined for remarkable growth. The third of these parables is the Parable of the Leaven.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. What was leaven?

3. Jesus symbolically used leaven in other of His teachings (Matthew 16:5-12; Luke 12:1), and so did the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). How is leaven used in these passages?

4. Compare or contrast how Jesus is symbolically using leaven in the Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21).

5. Is the leaven in the Parable of the Leaven a positive or negative influence? Explain.

6. What would the "three measures of meal" (the loaf) represent in this parable of Jesus?

7. In what ways does the growth of the kingdom of heaven compare to leaven hidden in three measures of meal?

8. How does our being "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16) fit in with the Parable of the Leaven?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

- b. Romans 14:17.
- c. Hebrews 12:25-29.
- d. 1 Corinthians 15:21-26.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Eight

The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

(Matthew 13:45-46)

Introduction:

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure depicts the value of the kingdom of heaven to one who accidentally finds it. However, the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price speaks of the value of the kingdom of heaven to one who deliberately sets out to find it.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. What kind of person is Jesus describing in this parable?

3. Does this parable suggest we can “buy” or “earn” our way into the kingdom of heaven? Explain.

4. If salvation is a gift of God’s grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), how is it that we “buy” the kingdom of heaven?

5. The New Testament provides us with four good examples of those who were looking (searching) for something of spiritual value. Describe how each fits in with this parable of Jesus.
 - a. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39).

b. Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8, 30-33).

c. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15).

d. The Bereans (Acts 17:10-11).

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Nine

The Parable of the Dragnet

(Matthew 13:47-50)

Introduction:

In the parables studied so far, Jesus has impressed several things on the mind of His disciples. First, not everyone will be receptive to the Word, and Satan will make every effort to prevent the kingdom from thriving. Second, the kingdom may start out small, but will grow. Third, there will be those who find the kingdom either by accident or because they are searching for it, and will sacrifice all they have to gain it. Now, Jesus wants to impress His disciples once again that even though there will be a mixture of good and bad in the kingdom, there will be a final separation. The first time Jesus taught this principle was in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). The second time Jesus teaches this same principle is here in the Parable of the Dragnet.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. What is the general theme of this parable?

3. What is a dragnet?

4. In what way will there be a separation of the good from the bad (the just from the wicked), and who will do the separating?

Lesson Ten

The Parable of the Householder

(Matthew 13:51-52)

Introduction:

When Jesus asked "have you understood all these things" (Matthew 13:51), He was probably speaking of all the parables He had taught up to this point -- truths that were related to "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." When the disciples replied in the affirmative, Jesus taught another parable known as The Parable of the Householder. This parable seems to be speaking more directly to those who also should have understood all these things, but didn't -- the scribes (those who were trained in the finer points of the Law of Moses). More specifically, Jesus speaks about those scribes who had been "instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 13:52).

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. This parable describes the disciples of the Lord in the following ways.
 - a. Disciples are like scribes who knew and understood the Word of God. Explain why it is important for us to know and understand the Word of God.

 - b. Disciples are like a householder with a treasure. What is the "treasure" out of which the householder brings out things new and old (See: Psalms 19:7-11; Proverbs 3:13-18; Colossians 2:2-3)?

- c. Every disciple has both an old and a new treasure. What would best represent the "old" and the "new" treasure (See: Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Eleven

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

(Matthew 18:21-35)

Introduction:

The previous parables have concentrated mostly on the kingdom of heaven itself, along with a description of those who will be found in the kingdom -- both good and bad. However, the next parable focuses more on the specific character of those who will make up the kingdom -- those who display mercy and forgiveness.

Questions to Consider:

1. What prompted this parable (Matthew 18:21)?

2. Describe the events in this parable.

3. Read the following verses, and explain why Peter believed he only needed to forgive a brother who had sinned against him up to seven times in a day (Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6).

4. Explain Jesus' response (Matthew 18:22).

5. Some commentators believe the talent mentioned in this parable may have been equivalent to six thousand denarii. It is also said that one denarius was the equivalent of a days wage for the average working man. Based on this information, calculate and answer the following questions.

- a. The first debtor owed the king ten thousand talents. How many days wages (or how many denarii) would be required to pay this debt? How many years? What does this tell you about this man's debt?
 - b. The second debtor owed the first debtor one hundred denarii. How many days wages would be required to pay this debt? What does this tell you about this man's debt?
6. What did the first debtor ask for, what did the king do, and why did he do it?
 7. What did the second debtor ask for, what did the first debtor do, and why did he do it?
 8. What was the king's reaction, and what was the first debtor's punishment?
 9. Which of the two debtors best represent us when it comes to our sins against God?
 10. Which of the two debtors best represent those who sin against us?
 11. How do we develop a forgiving spirit (See: Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)?

12. Is it possible for us to put an offense out of our mind (See: Genesis 41:51; Philippians 3:13; 2 Timothy 4:16).

13. Read Matthew 6:14-15. What did Jesus teach about forgiveness here?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twelve

The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

(Matthew 20:1-16)

Introduction:

In the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, Jesus focuses on another attitude of heart that has no place in the kingdom of heaven. This parable has been difficult for many expositors, and the explanations have varied significantly. However, a careful reading of the text should allow us to understand the main point of Jesus' teaching.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. To understand the setting of this parable, read Matthew 19:16-30, and answer the following questions.
 - a. Who first approached Jesus and what was his question (Matthew 19:16)?

 - b. What was Jesus' reply, and why did the man go away sorrowful (Matthew 19:21-22)?

 - c. What did Jesus say to His disciples about riches (Matthew 19:23-24)?

 - d. What was their response (Matthew 19:25)?

 - e. What was Peter's question (Matthew 19:27)?

- f. What was Jesus' reply (Matthew 19:28-30)?
3. What was the chief complaint among those who in the parable who labored all day (Matthew 20:12)?
 4. Since the parable is in response to Peter's question (Matthew 19:27), who would the workers be who were the first into the vineyard?
 5. Who would be the workers who arrived later to work in the vineyard?
 6. What is the main point of the parable?
 7. What kept the laborers who were hired last from going into the vineyard earlier (Matthew 20:7)? What does this tell you about their desire to work?
 8. Is this parable teaching that those who **purposely** put off obeying the gospel until the last moment will be saved (See: Matthew 20:7)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

5. How were the "tax collectors and harlots" like the first son?

6. Which kind of son would be described by James 1:22-27? The first or the second?

7. Which kind of son would be described in Luke 6:46? The first or the second?

8. If we are saved by "grace through faith" and "not of works" (Ephesians 2:8-9), isn't requiring "obedience" just another form of legalism? Explain.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Fourteen

The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers **(Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-20)**

Introduction:

During His final week in Jerusalem, Jesus taught three parables against those Jewish religious and political leaders who opposed Him. First came the Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32) in which Jesus characterized the chief priests and elders of the people like the son who gladly says he will do his father's will, then later refused to obey. The second of these parables, the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-20), is also spoken to those who stood in opposition to Jesus and were plotting His death. In this parable, Jesus shows these wicked men that He is well aware of their plots and schemes. The final parable spoken to those who opposed Jesus will be the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14).

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. If Jesus is speaking this parable to the Jewish religious and political leaders, what would the vineyard represent (See: Isaiah 5:1-7)?

3. Who was represented by the landowner in this parable?

4. Who would be represented by the wicked vinedressers?

5. Who would the servants of the landowner represent?

6. Who is the landowner's son?

7. Who were the "builders" and who was the "stone" they rejected (See: Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Psalms 118:22-23; Acts 4:10-12).

8. What did Jesus mean when He said, "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44; also Luke 20:18)?

9. What does this parable teach about how we should view the blessings and privileges God has given us?

10. From the following passages, what does the Bible teach about the privileges we neglect as Christians (John 15:1-2, 6; Revelation 2:4-5, 16; 3:1-3; Hebrews 10:26-31)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

3. Who would the "servants" of the King be in this parable (Matthew 22:5-6)? (Compare with: Matthew 21:33-46)

4. Why was the King so furious?

5. Compare Matthew 22:7 to Luke 19:41-44, and describe what event Jesus may have been warning about.

6. Who would be represented by those who were **first** invited to the wedding feast, and who would be represented by those who were invited **after** the others refused to come?

7. Hosts customarily provided their guests with suitable apparel for a wedding feast. What kind of attitude was displayed by the one who was not properly attired?

8. What was the punishment of this person, and why was it so severe? (Compare: Matthew 13:42, 50).

9. How would we apply the final statement of Jesus today (Matthew 22:14)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Sixteen

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins

(Matthew 25:1-13)

Introduction:

After Jesus warned His disciples about the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24), He proceeds to teach them two additional parables. Some scholars are uncertain as to whether the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and the Parable of the Talents is a continuation of the warning Jesus gave of the need to prepare for the coming destruction of Jerusalem, or whether the warning is to be prepared for His eventual Second Coming. Some of the parables we have already examined describe what will take place in the "kingdom of heaven" when Jesus returns (the Parable of the Wheat and Tares, and the Parable of the Dragnet), and it is almost universally agreed that the Matthew 25:31-46 pertains to the Final Judgment at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and the Parable of the Talents seem to fit best in the context of the Final Judgment of Matthew 25:31-46. In either case, there are valuable and timely lessons to learn from both parables.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. What is the main theme or the central point of this parable?

3. How does this parable compare to the following passages:
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.

 - b. 2 Peter 3:10-12.

- c. Revelation 3:2-3.
-
- 4. How are some Christians today like the following:
 - a. The five foolish virgins?

 - b. The five wise virgins?
-
- 5. The five foolish virgins seemed to have wanted to get by with only a “minimal” amount of oil. What kind of attitude does this suggest?
-
- 6. The five wise virgins could not share their oil with the foolish. Is it possible for us to “share” our accomplishments and work with others? Explain.
-
- 7. What was the final warning of Jesus and how does it apply to us (Matthew 25:13)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Seventeen

The Parable of the Talents

(Matthew 25:14-30)

Introduction:

The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins and the Parable of the Talents were both spoken by Jesus to His disciples immediately after warning them about coming destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24). Although some believe these parables are a continuation of the warning Jesus gave concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, it appears that they fit best into the context of the Final Judgment of Matthew 25:31-46. While the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins stresses the need to be prepared, the Parable of the Talents seems to emphasize being productive and working for the Lord while we wait for His return. The word "Talent" in this parable pertains to a sum of money. One talent was approximately 6000 denarii, or the amount of money an average working man would earn during a twenty year period of employment (since a denarius is an average day's wage).

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events in this parable.

2. What is the significance of talents being given to each man "according to his own ability" (Matthew 25:15)?

3. What was the point Jesus was attempting to make in verse 19?

4. What kind of person is being described by the following:
 - a. The ten talent man and the five talent man who doubled their investment?

 - b. The one talent man who simply hid his investment?

5. What should the one talent man have done with the investment? Why?

6. What does Jesus mean by the statement "to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away" (Matthew 25:29)?

7. Has every Christian been given talents (using the word "talents" to speak of God-given abilities)? Explain.

8. What does this lesson tell you about the sins of **omission** as well as sins of **commission**?

9. List the "talents" (abilities) God has given you. Are you using them to the fullest of your potential?

10. What are ways we can determine our "talents" (abilities)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Eighteen

The Parable of the Two Debtors

(Luke 7:41-43)

Introduction:

This parable appears only in Luke. It was meant to focus the attention of one self-righteous man on one forgiven sinful woman, and cause him to understand how grateful everyone should be that God has forgiven us of our sins. However, there is a deeper message in this parable. It also draws our attention to acts of service we may do in return for the gracious gift of salvation that has been so freely given to us.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the setting of this parable (See: Luke 7:36-40)?

2. Describe the events in this parable.

3. From the setting of this parable, what significant facts do you know about Simon? What do these facts tell you about what Simon's attitude toward God's forgiveness **should** have been?

4. What significant facts do we know about this woman, and how is she different from Simon?

5. Although the two debtors in Jesus' parable owed different amounts, what one thing did they have in common?

6. What kind of persons would be represented by a 500 denarii debt verses a 50 denarii debt, and what one thing do each have in common?

7. Which debtor loved the creditor more? Why? Explain your answer.

8. What had Simon failed to do that any good host should have done? By contrast, what did the woman do?

9. What did Jesus mean when He said, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much" (Luke 7:47a)?

10. What did Jesus mean by the words, "to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little" (Luke 7:47b)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Nineteen

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

(Luke 10:25-37)

Introduction:

This is another parable that appears only in Luke, and is perhaps one of the best known parables of Jesus. The term "Good Samaritan" has been given to hospitals, and even to laws which encourage those who see others in life threatening situations to offer assistance without fear of reprisals. Unfortunately, this parable has been given all kinds of allegorical interpretations which have obscured the simple meaning of the lesson. As with all parables, there is a tendency to read too much into the parable. Let's see if we can discover the simple, direct message Jesus taught on this occasion.

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the setting of this parable (See: Luke 10:25-29)?
2. What was a "lawyer" as used in the context of Luke 10:25?
3. What was the lawyer's purpose for posing his questions to Jesus?
4. When the lawyer asked, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life," what did Jesus do? What is the significance of pointing this man to the Law?
5. What is involved in the commandments to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (See: Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18)?

6. Jesus quoted these same commandments on another occasion, but added one additional statement. What did He mean by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:40)?
7. How was the lawyer seeking to "justify himself" by asking, "And who is my neighbor" (Luke 10:29)?
8. Describe the main points of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
9. What is known about the road between Jericho and Jerusalem?
10. What is significant about a priest and a Levite passing the wounded man?
11. Who were the Samaritans, and why were they so despised by the Jews (See: John 4:9; 2 Kings 17:24-41)?
12. What is significant about the extent to which the Samaritan goes to take care of the wounded man?

13. Describe how Jesus reworded the question of the lawyer, and what that implies (Luke 10:29, 36).

14. Who is our neighbor?

15. What does this parable teach us about the cost of being compassionate toward others?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty

The Parable of the Friend at Midnight

(Luke 11:1-13)

Introduction:

While most of the parables of Jesus dealt with the theme of the kingdom of heaven, some are responses to specific questions Jesus was asked by either His disciples or even by His enemies. This parable is Jesus' response to a question He was asked about prayer by one of the disciples. Luke writes, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'" (Luke 11:1). Jesus did three things in answering this request. First, He told them how to pray, and what we should pray for. Second, He taught a parable which stressed the importance of being persistent in prayer. Finally, He followed up the parable with an explanation of what He had intended to illustrate.

Questions to Consider:

1. Examine the following passages and describe the prayer habits of Jesus.
 - a. Mark 1:35.

 - b. Luke 5:16.

 - c. Luke 6:12-13.

 - d. John 17.

 - e. Matthew 26:36-44.

- f. Matthew 27:46 and Luke 23:34, 46.
2. Jesus teaches a lesson on prayer by giving an example of how one should pray, and what should be included in that prayer (See: Luke 11:2-4). Jesus taught a similar lesson on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. What did Jesus mean by the words "in this manner, therefore, pray?" (See: Matthew 6:9-15).
 3. Compare the two lessons on prayer (Luke 11:2-4 with Matthew 6:9-15). What do these lessons teach regarding how we should pray, and what should be included in our prayers?
 4. Describe the events of the parable known as "The Friend at Midnight" (Luke 11:5-8).
 5. What does Jesus teach about the importance of persistence in our prayers (See: Luke 11:9-10)?
 6. What was Jesus trying to tell His disciples in Luke 11:11-13?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty One

The Parable of the Rich Fool

(Luke 12:13-21)

Introduction:

On one occasion Jesus was interrupted during a series of lessons by a man who wanted Him to settle a family dispute over an inheritance. Jesus not only responded in a terse manner, but proceeded to warn His disciples to “beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15). Immediately, Jesus launched into what has become known as the Parable of the Rich Fool. It concerned a covetous man who foolishly placed all his confidence in earthly riches. In a materialistic society like ours, this parable is very timely.

Questions to Consider:

1. Examine the following verses and briefly describe the content of the three lessons Jesus had been teaching the crowd before He was interrupted.
 - a. Luke 12:1-3.

 - b. Luke 12:4-7.

 - c. Luke 12:8-12.

2. What does the man's question (Luke 12:13) tell you about his character and where his heart was?

3. From Jesus' response (Luke 12:14), what tells you the Lord was displeased with the interruption?

4. How did the Lord view the real nature of the man's problem (Luke 12:15)?

5. Describe the events of the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21).

6. There are three basic mistakes the Rich Fool made. Explain each of the following in your own words.
 - a. He did not thank or give glory to God.

 - b. He did not share his bounty with others.

 - c. He did not understand his own mortality.

7. What does it mean to be "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21)?

8. In the verses that follow, Jesus taught two important lessons. Explain each.
 - a. Luke 12:22-32.

 - b. Luke 12:33-34.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Two

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

(Luke 13:6-9)

Introduction:

Jesus taught several parables that spoke of the wickedness and fate that awaited the religious leaders of Israel, such as the Parable of the Two Sons, the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, and the Parable of the Wedding Feast. These parables were spoken by the Lord during the final week before His crucifixion. On an earlier occasion, Jesus taught a similar parable that related to God's dealings with the nation of Israel as a whole -- how the nation would be destroyed if it rejected Jesus as the Messiah. That parable was the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree. It's a parable that speaks of the need for both individual as well as national repentance.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events leading up to this parable (Luke 13:1-5).

2. Describe the basic elements of the parable (Luke 13:6-9).

3. What does this parable teach about God extending privileges to Israel?

4. What does this parable teach about God's longsuffering toward Israel?

5. What does this parable teach about Israel's unfruitfulness?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Three

The Parable of Taking the Lowest Place

(Luke 14:7-11)

Introduction:

Jesus did not limit His parables to simply instructing His disciples. As we have already seen, He used parables to respond to those who challenged Him, as well as to teach others important spiritual lessons. The latter were often taught in casual, informal settings. Such was the case in the Parable of Taking the Lowest Place. Jesus used a casual setting to teach a valuable lesson on humility.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events leading up to this parable (Luke 14:1-7).

2. Describe the events of the Parable of Taking the Lowest Place (Luke 14:8-11).

3. What is the main principle taught in this parable? Explain.

4. In the Parable of Taking the Lowest Place, Jesus was obviously dealing with the sin of pride. Examine each of the following verses and explain what they teach on the subject of pride.
 - a. Proverbs 8:13.

 - b. Mark 7:21-23.

- c. 1 John 2:15-17.
5. From the following passages, what do we learn about humility?
- a. Psalms 25:9 and Proverbs 3:34.

 - b. Proverbs 11:2.

 - c. Proverbs 18:12.

 - d. Colossians 3:12.

 - e. 1 Peter 5:6.

 - f. Philippians 2:3

 - g. Titus 3:2 and 2 Timothy 2:24-25.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Four

The Parable of the Great Supper

(Luke 14:15-24)

Introduction:

The Parable of the Great Supper was taught in the same setting as the Parable of Taking the Lowest Place. Jesus was a guest at the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees. He had gone there to enjoy a meal on the Sabbath, but was being watched closely by the scribes (lawyers) and Pharisees who were present as He healed a man with dropsy on that Sabbath. After silencing their objections, Jesus revealed the pride and hypocrisy of the Pharisees by illustrating how they all sought the best seats. He immediately launched into a second parable known as the Parable of the Great Supper. Although this parable is similar to the Parable of the Wedding Feast, there are marked differences. The Parable of the Wedding Feast, which was spoken much later during the ministry of Jesus, seems to focus more on the nation of Israel as a whole, while the Parable of the Great Supper seems to be more limited.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events preceding the parable (Luke 14:12-15).

2. These verses contain a classic "not - but" statement. A "not - but" statement is often used in Scripture to mean "not so much this, but more this." It places a greater emphasis on the latter over the former. With this in mind, what is Jesus saying in these verses (Luke 14:12-15)?

3. Describe the events of the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:16-24).

4. What period of time would the "Great Supper" in this parable represent? Explain.

5. What kind of people are being described in verses 18-20? (Compare: Matthew 6:33 and Luke 10:38-42).

6. Who would best represent those who accepted the invitation to the "Great Supper?" (See: Matthew 21:31-32 and Matthew 21:43).

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Five

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

(Luke 15:1-7)

Introduction:

In the fifteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus taught three parables back-to-back that speak of God's love for the lost. They are the Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Parable of the Lost Coin, and the Parable of the Lost Son (also known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son). The purpose of these parables was to silence the scribes and Pharisees who were complaining about Jesus being a friend to sinners. They were spoken to reveal the extent of God's love toward those lost in sin, and to show what our attitude should be toward the lost as well.

Questions to Consider:

1. There were two groups of people who drew near to Jesus. Tell what you know about each group as they are described in this setting and in other New Testament passages.
 - a. The tax collectors (publicans).

 - b. Sinners.

2. The chief complains of the scribes and Pharisees against Jesus was "This Man receives sinners and eats with them" (Luke 15:2). In your own words explain why the scribes and the Pharisees would murmur against Jesus for associating with tax collectors and sinners.

3. Describe the events in the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7).

4. What does this parable tell you about the extent to which God will go to find those lost in sin? (See: Luke 19:10).

5. What does this parable tell you about God's attitude toward those who are found?

6. How do we reconcile the fact that we are to be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), but yet we can associate with those in the world (1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 10:27-29)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

5. What are some of the most common attitudes that many (including ourselves) have toward those who repent? What should our attitude be? Explain.

6. Why should it be an occasion of great joy when a sinner repents?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Seven

The Parable of the Lost Son (Prodigal Son)

(Luke 15:11-32)

Introduction:

The Parable of the Lost Son is also known as the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The word "prodigal" means "reckless" or "wasteful," and speaks of someone who carelessly misuses something of great value. The term "prodigal" is an accurate description of the young man who "wasted his possessions with prodigal living" (Luke 15:13). Like the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin, the Parable of the Lost Son was intended to silence the scribes and Pharisees who were complaining about Jesus being a friend to sinners. But this parable did more than simply illustrate God's love toward sinners, it revealed the evil in the heart of those like the scribes and Pharisees who were like the older brother, refusing to acknowledge sinners when they did repent.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does the younger son's request tell you about the attitude of his heart toward his father and the inheritance (Luke 15:12)?

2. According to Deuteronomy 21:17, how were estates between two brothers to be divided?

3. What happened to the younger son's inheritance (Luke 15:13-14a)?

4. What is significant about this young man working to feed pigs? (See: Leviticus 11:7).

5. What words are used to describe the turning point in the younger son's life? (See: Luke 15:17). Explain.

6. What two things was the younger son determined to do (Luke 15:18-19)?

7. How was the younger son received by the father (Luke 15:20b)? Explain.

8. What is the significance of the following (Luke 15:22-23):
 - a. The best robe?

 - b. The ring?

 - c. Shoes?

 - d. The fatted calf?

9. What did the father mean by the phrase "for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24)?

10. What was the attitude of the older brother (Luke 15:25-30)?

11. What was the older brother's chief complaint (Matthew 15:29-30)?

12. What was the father's response (Luke 15:31-32)?

13. What words does the older brother use to describe the younger, as opposed to the words the father uses (Luke 15:30, 32). Explain the significance of this.

14. Who do the following characters in this parable represent? Explain each.
 - a. The father?

 - b. The younger son?

 - c. The older brother?

15. What were the key lessons Jesus was attempting to teach in this parable?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Eight

The Parable of the Unjust Steward

(Luke 16:1-15)

Introduction:

The Parable of the Unjust Steward is one which was directed specifically to the disciples of Jesus, although the Pharisees happened to overhear what Jesus said and derided Him. In this parable, Jesus not only gives the parable itself, but also gives the interpretation of the parable. While many consider this parable difficult to understand, since it appears on the surface that Jesus is teaching His disciples to be dishonest, nothing could be further from the truth. The parable has one central theme -- one main point. Jesus is teaching His disciples to exercise shrewdness, to be sharp and aware, to be "street smart" when it comes to handling material wealth.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events of the Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8).

2. What did Jesus mean by the statement, "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8b)? Explain.

3. Why is "mammon" (riches) called "unrighteous mammon" (Luke 16:9)?

4. Luke 16:9 presents various problems with the interpretation. Some believe the "friends" mentioned in this verse are God the Father and the Son, while others believe the "friends" are those who helped the unjust steward. How do you understand this verse? Explain.

5. Explain the two maxims found in Luke 16:10:
 - a. "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much." (v. 10a)

 - b. "He who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much." (V. 10b)

6. What is the point Jesus is attempting to make in verse 11?

7. What is the "physical" or "earthly" application of verse 12, and what is the "spiritual" or "heavenly" application?
 - a. Physical or earthly application:

 - b. Spiritual or heavenly application:

8. Why is it impossible to serve "two masters" (Luke 16:13)?

9. Why did the Pharisees deride Jesus (Luke 16:14-15)?

10. Explain the response Jesus gave the Pharisees (Luke 16:15).

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Twenty Nine

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

(Luke 16:19-31)

Introduction:

There are doubts among various Biblical scholars and commentators as to whether the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a parable or an actual account. Generally speaking, do not use real characters. However, at least one of the characters in this story is real -- Abraham. It seems quite likely that Lazarus was a real person as well, as was the unnamed Rich Man. Jesus does not identify the Lazarus of this story (or parable), but he could have been any beggar, since Lazarus was a common name during the days of Jesus. Whether this is a parable or not does not change the truths taught in these verses. Although many, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, attempt to deny this as being a true story (because neither believe in a burning hell), that doesn't change the facts. Parables are an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. They are stories or narratives taken from nature or from everyday human experiences. Whether the story of The Rich Man and Lazarus is a parable or an actual event, it teaches certain undeniable truths. First, judgment awaits everyone after death -- a judgment in which some will be lost and some will be saved. Second, no one can change their fate following death -- they are either saved eternally or lost eternally. Finally, the dead do not return to warn the living -- we are warned from God's Word alone.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the two main characters of this parable (story) in life (Luke 16:19-20).

2. Describe the two main characters of this parable (story) in death (Luke 16:20-31).

3. How is the word "hades" used in the Scriptures, and how is it being used in this parable (story)?

4. What do the following verses tell you about the Rich Man's fate:
 - a. Luke 16:24-25.

 - b. Luke 16:26.

 - c. Luke 16:27-28.

5. What is the central lesson we learn from the final statement of Jesus (Luke 16:31)?

6. Is this parable (story) saying all rich men will end up as this one? Explain.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Thirty

The Parable of the Unprofitable Servant

(Luke 17:7-10)

Introduction:

On occasion, Jesus used the master-servant relationship to teach His disciples the importance of service to God, as in the Parable of the Talents. On other occasions, Jesus used abuses in the master-servant relationship to illustrate the wickedness of those who should have been servants of God but served themselves instead, as in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, and the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers. In the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant Jesus demonstrates an important lesson to His disciples -- servants are not greater than their masters, and are expected to do whatever they are commanded to do.

Questions to Consider:

1. The Parable of the Unprofitable Servant is preceded by a statement made by the disciples regarding the need for greater faith and a reply given by Jesus (Luke 17:5-6). How do these verses connect with the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant? Explain.

2. Jesus asked His disciples to first think of themselves as a master. Explain what a master would normally expect from his servant (Luke 17:7-9).

3. Jesus then asked His disciples to think of themselves as servants. Explain how a servant would normally view his duties (Luke 17:10).

4. Is this parable intended to explain the proper attitude of masters or servants? Explain your answer.

5. What does this parable teach us about our role as servants, and our reward for what we do?

6. Examine the following passages of Scripture and explain what they teach about earning or meriting salvation.
 - a. Titus 3:4-5.

 - b. Ephesians 2:4-9.

 - c. Isaiah 64:6.

7. If we cannot earn or merit salvation, and if it is solely by God's grace, is obedience necessary? Use the following passages of Scripture to explain your answer (John 14:15; John 15:10; 1 Corinthians 7:19b; 1 John 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 4:17).

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Thirty One

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

(Luke 18:1-8)

Introduction:

In the eighteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus taught two parables on the subject of prayer. The first is the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8), and the second is the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14). On another occasion, Jesus also taught a parable about persistent prayer -- the Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-13). Persistence in prayer is obviously something Jesus wanted His disciples to understand. The need for this kind of praying is just as important today as it was in the days of Jesus. Too many lose heart and fail to pray as they ought. Therefore, Jesus stressed the vital need to pray with determination and purpose.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the two main characters of this parable, and tell what you know about each (Luke 18:2-3).

2. What was the difficulty this widow faced (Luke 18:2-4a)?

3. Why did the judge agree to hear her case (Luke 18:4b-5)?

4. This parable presents what is often called "an argument from the lesser to the greater." Explain the point Jesus was trying to make.

5. What does this parable teach us about God's avenging of His elect? Explain.

6. What did Jesus mean when He asked, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8b)?

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Thirty Two

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

(Luke 18:9-14)

Introduction:

Two important parables on the subject of prayer are found in the eighteenth chapter of Luke. The first is the Parable of the Persistent Widow in which Jesus stressed the need to be persistent in prayer and not to lose heart. In the second, the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Jesus deals with another important factor in prayer -- having the proper attitude of heart. By means of contrast, Jesus presents two men in prayer, one a Pharisee and the other a Tax Collector. Pharisees were proud of their religious devotion and faithfulness to the traditions of the fathers, while Tax Collectors were often regarded with contempt as traitors, extortioners and covetous thieves. The key to understanding this parable is to closely examine the attitude of the heart of each man. One man's prayer accomplished nothing, while the other man went down to his house justified.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe what you know about Pharisees.

2. Describe what you know about Tax Collectors.

3. Examine the prayer of each man and tell what you see.
 - a. The prayer of the Pharisee (Luke 18:11-12).

- b. The Prayer of the Tax Collector (Luke 18:13).
4. What are the results of each prayer (Luke 18:14a)?
5. Part of the Pharisee's problem was self-righteousness. What do you learn about self-righteousness from the following passages?
 - a. Isaiah 64:6.
 - b. Luke 17:10.
 - c. Ephesians 2:8-10
 - d. Titus 3:3-5.
6. Another problem with the Pharisee was arrogance. What do you learn about arrogance from the following passages?
 - a. Proverbs 8:13.
 - b. Proverbs 16:18.
 - c. Proverbs 29:23.
 - d. Luke 14:11.

e. James 2:1-9.

7. On another occasion, Jesus taught a wonderful lesson on humility (The Parable of Taking the Lowest Place - Luke 14:7-11). What do the following passages teach about humility?

a. Isaiah 57:15.

b. Isaiah 66:1-2.

c. Luke 1:46-55.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Thirty Three

The Parable of the Minas

(Luke 19:11-27)

Introduction:

The parable of the Minas is similar in many respects to the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Both teach the need to be faithful in our service as we wait for the Lord's return. However, there are some differences between the two parables. Not only do the details of each parable vary slightly, but the setting for each is also different. In the Parable of the Minas, Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem shortly before His triumphal entry which would mark the beginning of the final week before His crucifixion. Some of His disciples were laboring under the misconception that the kingdom was to appear immediately. Therefore, Jesus used this opportunity to correct that error, and stress the need for His disciples to remain faithful until His eventual return. There is an interesting historical setting to this parable. The story parallels an actual event that occurred during the boyhood of Jesus. It concerns the time when Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, went to Rome to request his own kingdom in Palestine. The kingdom would still be subject to Rome, but under the direct control of Archelaus. Similar to the events in the parable, the appointment of Archelaus was opposed by a delegation of his own subjects.

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe the events of the parable.

2. How does this parable explain that the kingdom of heaven would not appear immediately (Luke 19:12)? Explain.

3. When did the Lord "receive" His kingdom (See: Acts 2:30-36; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22; Daniel 7:13-14)?

4. What does this parable reveal about the role of the Lord's disciples between His departure and His return (Luke 19:13)? Explain your answer.

5. How does this parable portray the rejection of the Lord's reign (Luke 19:14)? Explain.

6. What does this parable teach about the time of reckoning or accounting that awaits every Christian (Luke 19:15-26)? Explain.

7. What does this parable teach about the judgment awaiting those who do not submit to Christ as King (Luke 19:27)? Explain.

Application:

What personal applications can we make from this parable?

Lesson Thirty Four

The Parable of Jesus - Conclusion

Introduction:

The parables of Jesus were stories or a narratives taken from nature or from everyday human experiences. Most simply defined, they were an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. They were intended to focus the listener's attention on the attributes of the kingdom of heaven -- the rule of Christ within the hearts of men and women everywhere. The disciples of the Lord were blessed to learn "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" because they had the right kind of attitude toward Jesus and His teaching. But those whose hearts had been hardened by their own wickedness and rebellion were kept from understanding the parables. Through the use of parables, Jesus was simply attempting to separate truth-seekers from curiosity-seekers. Let's see what we have learned from the parables of Jesus.

Questions to Consider:

1. What do we learn about the character and nature of the kingdom from the following parables (give only a one sentence summary of each parable):
 - a. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)?

 - b. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)?

 - c. The Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-21)?

 - d. The Parable of the Growing Seed (Mark 4:26-29)?

 - e. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure, and the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:44-46)?

- f. The Parable of the Dragnet (Matthew 13:47-50)?

 - g. The Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-20), the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1-14), the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9), and the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:15-24)?
2. What do we learn about the character of those who would be the disciples of the kingdom from the following parables (give only a one sentence summary of each parable):
- a. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 13-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15)?

 - b. The Parable of the Householder (Matthew 13:51-52)?

 - c. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35)?

 - d. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16)?

 - e. The Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32).

 - f. The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13)?

- g. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), and the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11-27)?
 - h. The Parable of the Two Debtors (Luke 7:41-43)?
 - i. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)?
 - j. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:1-13), and the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8)?
 - k. The Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21)?
 - l. The Parable of Taking the Lowest Place (Luke 14:7-11), and the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14)?
 - m. The Parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-15), and the Parable (Story) of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)?
 - n. The Parable of the Unprofitable Servants (Luke 17:7-10)?
3. What do we learn about the character or attributes of the King from the following parables (give only a one sentence summary of each parable):
- a. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7), and the Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)?
 - b. The Parable of the Lost Son (the Prodigal Son) (Luke 15:11-32)?

- c. The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), and the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11-27)?
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- 4. What shall we do with what we have learned from the parables of Jesus (See: Matthew 13:12-17)?