

*Unto you it is
given to know the
Mysteries of the
kingdom of God.
~Luke 8:10~*

Parables

in the

Gospel of Luke



BC Youth Conference 2012

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God”

Parables in the Gospel of Luke

Parable	Passage	Parallel Passage	
The Patched Cloth & Wineskins	Luke 5: 36-39	Matt. 9:16-17	Mark 2: 21-22
Blind Leaders / Mote & Beam	Luke 6: 39-42	Matt. 5:3-5	
Trees & Fruit	Luke 6: 43-45	Matt. 7:15-20	
The Two Builders	Luke 6: 46-49	Matt. 7:24-27	
The Two Debtors	Luke 7: 41-43		
The Sower	Luke 8: 4-15	Matt. 13:3-23	Mark 4:1-20
The Candle & The Bushel	Luke 8: 16	Matt. 5:14-16	Mark 4:21-22
The Good Samaritan	Luke 10: 30-37		
Friend at Midnight	Luke 11: 5-13		
Strong Man Spoiled	Luke 11: 17-23	Matt. 12:24-30	Mark 3:22-27
Unoccupied House	Luke 11: 24-26	Matt. 12:43-45	
The Eye Single & Evil	Luke 11: 33-36	Matt. 6:22-23	
The Rich Fool	Luke 12: 16-21		
The Goodman of the House	Luke 12: 35-40	Matt. 24:42-44	
Faithful and Evil Servants	Luke 12: 41-48	Matt. 24:45-51	
The Fig tree in the Vineyard	Luke 13: 6-9		
Mustard Seed & Leaven	Luke 13: 18-21	Matt.13:31-33	Mark 4:30-32
Lowest Place	Luke 14: 7-11		
Rules of Host	Luke 14: 12-14		
Great Supper	Luke 14: 16-24		
Tower Builder / Warrior King	Luke 14: 28-33		
Salt	Luke 14: 34-35	Matt. 5:13	Mark 9:49-50
Lost Sheep	Luke 15: 3-7		
Lost Coin	Luke 15: 8-10		
Lost Son	Luke 15: 11-32		
Unjust Steward	Luke 16: 1-13		
Rich Man & Lazarus	Luke 16: 19-32		
Unprofitable Servants	Luke 17: 7-10		
Unjust Judge	Luke 18: 1-8		
Pharisee & Publican	Luke 18: 9-14		
Camel & Needles Eye	Luke 18: 25	Matt. 19:24	Mark 10:25
The Pounds	Luke 19: 11-27		
The Husbandman in the Vineyard	Luke 20: 9-18	Matt. 21:33-41	Mark 12:1-9
The Fig Tree	Luke 21: 29-31	Matt. 24:32-33	Mark 13:28-29

“And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.” ~ Mark 4:33-34

Why In Parables?

In the simplest of terms a parable may be described as a fictional story which the listeners could relate to, that contained a lesson within it that could be put into practice in daily life. And while this description may be completely true, we mustn't think that the parables which were given by our Lord were merely simple stories with simple lessons. They taught divine principles and divine lessons in a way not otherwise possible, and in a way that could be easily recollected and passed on.

In Proverbs we are told that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter," (Proverbs 25:2); and the reason Christ gives in Matthew 13:10-17 for speaking in parables, ties directly into this. Simply put, the purpose was to divide his audience between those who were truly interested in what he had to say, from those who were not.

Thus, the parables had the dual affect of revealing aspects of the truth and making it easier to understand for those who truly desired it, and of concealing the truth and making it harder to understand for those who were ignorant and not really interested. Christ therefore declared, "For whosoever hath (i.e. those who have an interest, and who are of a humble spirit), to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not (i.e. those who are proud and do not desire the truth, and who willingly walk in ignorance), from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Matthew 13:12).

This is the effect parables have, and they require an initial level of understanding in order to know what they mean. For us, the parables are easy to understand because we have a full picture of the purpose of God. Our eyes have been opened to the understanding of the gospel message, and we understand the things that have been written elsewhere in the Word which complement the meaning of the parables. For this we should be truly thankful.

But there are those who are willingly ignorant. Christ describes them as having a heart that is waxed gross, ears that are dull of hearing, and eyes that are closed, (Matt. 13:15). Those who are of this way, who should know better, and who Paul declares to be "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20), God has made it harder for them to understand The Truth. The parables confuse matters for them, and indeed, sometimes they even cater to their vain deceits (such as with the Rich man and Lazarus).

This is exactly in accordance with how God said he would treat such individuals – He would confirm their intentions. If a man decides that he wants to be in ignorance of the truth, God will keep Him in ignorance: "God gave them up to uncleanness... gave them up unto vile affections... gave them over to a reprobate mind" (Romans 1:24, 26, 28). In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul says that God would send a strong delusion, that those who chose to receive not the love of The Truth should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who had pleasure in unrighteousness," (2Thess. 2:10-12). This is how God worked with Pharaoh in Egypt, it's how He worked with the ignorant in Christ's day, and it's how He works with people today, "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand," (Luke 8:10).

How truly blessed we are then, to know The Truth, and to be able to understand these things, as Christ declared, "blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear," (Matt. 13:16). For us, the parables make The Truth easier to understand and enhance our understanding of it, bringing to light things that are necessary to understand about our nature and our high calling.

Tips For Studying The Parables

Whenever we study a parable, there are some things we always want to take note of:

1. The Context:

Whatever interpretation we give to a parable, it must fit the context. Identify who the parable was being addressed to, the problem Christ wished to address, where it was being given, what the events were that led up to the parable, and also look at the surrounding teaching.

2. Old Testament Echoes:

Many of the parables draw directly upon teaching, stories, or real events that took place in the Old Testament. We must look for those echoes and familiarize ourselves with those passages where the parable is being drawn from, knowing that Christ's audience would've known them well.

3. Other Echoes:

Look for other echoes in both the Old and New Testaments. Search for similar ideas, or the same combination of key words, which might provide us with practical examples of the parable or lead us to other passages where the parable is being drawn upon or made allusion to. Echoes can be found by using cross-references, a concordance, or the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.

4. The Theme of Scripture:

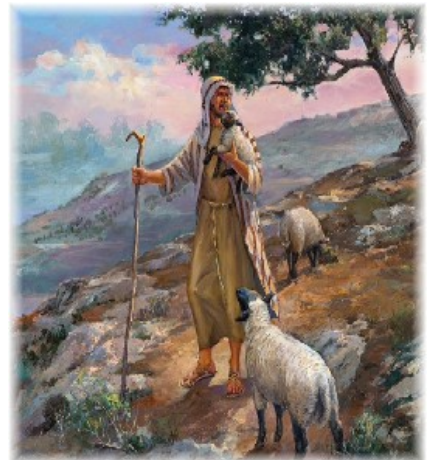
The whole of scripture follows the theme established in Genesis 3:16, where God pronounced an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. This battle between the thinking of the flesh and the mind of the spirit plays itself out throughout scripture on a number of levels. Everything from the historical accounts to prophecy follow this theme, and the parables are no exception. We must, therefore, consider the parables in their larger context and not exclude them from such things as Bible prophecy. (Indeed, many of the parables tie in very nicely to some of the prophecies given in Daniel and Revelation).

5. The Use of Symbols & Imagery:

Parables, like prophecy, were given in symbol, and were never intended to be interpreted literally. Imagery was used based on what people were familiar with, and sometimes that imagery had no basis in reality (as is the case with The Rich Man and Lazarus). The images used though, were absolutely perfect for what they stood to represent, so we must think about them carefully.

6. Note The Peculiarities:

Often included in parables is either something utterly absurd, or completely unjust. This was a technique used by Christ in order to teach us something important. For instance, in the parable of the lost sheep, what shepherd would actually leave the 99 behind to search for 1 lost one? Yet this was put there to teach us that we must go to absurd degrees to recover our brethren who have gone astray. Or, in the parable of the Husbandmen in the Vineyard, what would make the husbandmen possibly think that by killing their master's son they would get the inheritance? Yet this was to show the religious rulers at the time just how irrational their reasoning was.



The Gospel of Luke – Its Author & Theme

There is very little that we know about Luke from scripture, and yet his writings comprise about 1/3 of the New Testament (being both the author of the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles). We know that Luke was a Gentile, and was in fact the only gentile writer of a New Testament book. Traditionally Luke is thought to be of Antioch in Syria, later becoming a resident of Philippi before coming into contact with Paul in Troas, where it is believed that he learned the gospel.

Luke's Occupation:

The name Luke is that of a slave, and as such, it is possible that he might've been responsible for the early education of the children in the family to which he belonged. We also know from Colossians 4:14, along with numerous other clues spread throughout his writings, that Luke was a physician. From his detailed writings in the Acts of the Apostles concerning Paul's experiences on the sea, it has been suggested that before he came to an understanding of the gospel, Luke was a doctor on board a ship.

All of these experiences seem to have had a great influence upon him – an influence which comes through in his writings, and one which gave him a very unique appreciation and perspective of the gospel message that other writers of the New Testament did not have.

Being a Gentile, Luke would have been particularly interested in the way in which the gospel message had been opened up to the Gentiles; and as a physician, Luke would have had a special appreciation for the illness that affects all mankind – that of sin and death, and of the healing power that the acceptance of the gospel message could have upon a person.

In accordance with this, it is interesting just to note that the words Salvation, Save, Savior, as well as Joy, Rejoicing, and related terms appear more frequently in Luke's gospel than in Matthew and Mark's accounts – words which speak of the healing properties of the gospel message and the joy it can bring to people's lives.

Being a physician also meant that Luke had a considerable amount of concern and thought for the well-being of others, especially those of a lower class. It comes as no surprise then, that in his writings Luke places a special emphasis upon the sick, poor, and those considered to be of a lower status (such as the women and outcasts).

The Theme of Luke's Gospel:

The theme of Luke's gospel is stated for us in Luke 1:4 – “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed”. The word “certainty” used here by Luke literally means security, as well as steadfast and firm, and is used in Acts 5:3 by Luke to describe a well-secure prison. Luke's goal in writing therefore, was to provide us with the instruction necessary to keep us firm and unshakable in our faith in the face of all forms of danger, both from within and without.

Luke's Gospel - The Face of a Man:

To this end, Luke depicts Christ in his gospel as the man – and not just any man, but the man who was the priest; the one who was tempted in all ways as we are, yet was without sin. By this means, Luke provides us with Christ's example and teachings that are directly related to battling and overcoming our sinful nature.

In comparing the way in which Luke records some of the parables in his gospel to the way they are recorded in Matthew and Mark's accounts, and in noting the small and seemingly insignificant differences – from the words which Luke has added, to those which he has taken away, to those which he has completely changed – we find that Luke brings things to our attention that have to do with our nature and the battle we face with it each day. (This especially becomes apparent in the Parable of the Sower and in the Parable of the Two Builders, which attention will be drawn to in this study). He makes us aware of the affect our nature can have upon us; he helps us to stay spiritually alert by warning us of the dangers that exist and the traps that we can fall into in life; he help us to recognize the early signs of spiritual illness; and he provides us with instruction for times when we do fail.



“They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”~ Luke 5:31-32

Theme 1 – Spiritual Foundations

The Two Builders, The Sower, The Mote & The Beam

When we speak about spiritual foundations, we are concerning ourselves with those principles of our faith which are described by Luke as “the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). These foundation principles which our pioneer brethren described as The Truth to be Received and The Commandments of Christ, are the fundamentals of our faith, without which we would be without hope and without God in this world (Eph. 2:12). Those principles have such an impact on our life that it is our understanding of them and their application to life which determines the way we will live our lives in the sight of our Heavenly Father.

These things in mind, in this section we consider two parables which focus on the spiritual foundations of our faith: The Two Builders and The Sower. The first of these emphasizes the absolute necessity of finding and building upon the foundation, while the second focuses on the barriers to building on this foundation. For those who wish to do further study, available on the youth conference website are questions related to a third parable under this theme – The Mote & The Beam, which emphasizes the need for spiritual leaders to have a clear perception of those foundational elements of the faith, if they are to lead people in the way of righteousness.

Each of these parables emphasize the need for all disciples of Christ to be bearing the fruits of righteousness, the absolute necessity of building upon the one foundation by having a clear understanding and perception of the principles of the truth if we are to bear those fruits, and that there is only one way that leads to eternal life.

Truly, it is only with a clear view of the foundations of our faith that we will be able to faithfully endure the trials and temptations in life, and not fall away to the thinking of man or apostate religions that build upon that way of thinking which is natural to man, being after the course of this world.



The Two Builders ~ Luke 6:46-49

1. Luke 6:46 establishes the background to this parable. What is the problem Christ saw in his listeners? What two groups does he break them down into? How can we fall into these categories today?

When we compare Luke’s account of this parable to Matthew’s (Matt. 7:24-27), a number of small differences will appear in the way that they are recorded. The following chart highlights these differences, some of which will be considered as we progress through our study of this parable.

Phrases Omitted By Luke:	Phrases Added By Luke:	Words Changed By Luke:
• “Wise Man” – <i>Matt 7:24</i>	• “Digged Deep” – <i>v48</i>	• “Sand” changed to “earth”
• “Foolish Man” – <i>Matt 7:26</i>	• “Laid the Foundation” – <i>v48</i>	
• “Rain Descended” – <i>Matt 7:25</i>	• “Streams Beat Vehemently” – <i>v48</i>	
• “Winds Blew” – <i>Matt 7:27</i>	• “Could not shake it” – <i>v48</i>	
	• “Without a Foundation” – <i>v49</i>	
	• “Immediately it Fell” – <i>v49</i>	

2. Note the similarities and differences that exist between the two builders and the destruction of their homes in Luke’s account:

Similarities:

Differences:

3. Luke specifically omits mention that one man was wise and the other foolish (see chart above). What might Luke be trying to draw our attention to by doing this?

4. What does the house represent in scripture? Consider both positive and negative examples so that you can determine what the two houses each represent. (2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 6:10; Matt. 23:38; Zech. 5:11)

5. Refer back to the chart of differences between Luke's account and Matthew's.
 - a. How does Luke emphasize the need for a foundation?

 - b. How does Luke emphasize that there is only one foundation we can build on? Provide a cross-reference that supports that there is only one foundation.

6. Luke says that one of the houses was built on "the earth". Look up other references to "earth" in scripture, (examples: 1 Cor. 15:47; Col. 3:2,5; Phil. 3:19; James 3:15, 5:5; Rev. 11:10). What does it mean to build a house on the earth?

7. (Optional) In Revelation 13:8, 13:13, 13:14, and 14:6 the exact Greek phrase "upon the earth" is found, and these passages interestingly refer to those who " dwell upon the earth". Who are these passages referring to, and how would you draw a link between them and this parable?

8. How does Luke say the foundation of rock is obtained? Link this idea back to the previous 2 questions and see if you can see the significance and relation between the two foundations.

9. This rock foundation is defined in a number of places in scripture (Eph. 2:18-22; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Heb. 6:1-2; Acts 8:12; Acts 2:42; Matt. 16:16-18). After looking at each of the verses listed, in your own words briefly define what the foundation of the house is referring to.

10. In Psalm 87:1 we are told that God's foundation is in the holy mountains and in 1 Peter 2:6 we are told that the precious corner-stone (Christ) is laid in Zion. How does Zion relate to the foundation?
11. The house must be built on the foundation, which teaches us that the foundation principles (first principles) of the truth can in no way be separated from daily conduct.
 - a. In what way does the one support the other?
 - b. How is this point emphasized in this parable?
 - c. James 2:20-26 uses Abraham as an example to prove this. Think back to Abraham's life and note down at least 3 things that we would consider to be first principle beliefs, that Abraham had to believe in order to follow God's instruction to offer up Isaac as he did?
12. How important, therefore, is it for an ecclesia and an individual to meditate upon the First Principles of the Truth? What will happen if they are forgotten? Make reference to Hosea 4:6; Ephesians 4:14-15; 1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Peter 3:15.
13. Practically, how can individuals and ecclesias be continually reminded of the First Principles of the Truth? How can this be done without it becoming boring? Be prepared to discuss your ideas in your discussion groups.

14. When under the stormy winds of life, and ultimately the judgment to come, we are told the house built on the foundation of rock could not be shaken. Find examples in scripture where we are exhorted not to be shaken and note how it is linked to the foundation.

15. The Lord describes the storm as being made up of wind, rain, floods, beating waves, etc. (Luke 6:48-49) What is this ultimately referring to?

16. The Lord says that the one who builds his house without a foundation will face great ruin and will immediately fall (v49). When specifically will this take place...
 - a. For individuals who knew the Lord's way, but rejected it?

 - b. For those who don't know any better and are part of the house of apostasy?

17. Some Christians believe that all one must do to be saved is to be a good person (i.e. doing the fruit of the spirit) and that it doesn't matter what you believe. How does this parable refute this belief?

18. Summarize some key lessons / principles we can learn from this parable.

The Sower ~ Luke 8:4-15

The Parable of the Sower is very much focused on the foundations of the truth – and in turn asks us to examine our foundations. In it, there is a call to all those who hear the Word of God to respond; to those who respond, to examine themselves to see whether they are bearing fruit; to those who know the word, to sow the word; and to those who have sowed the word, to tend to the produce of that word. Very much, all these things, (from the message that we sow, to the reaction there is to it), depends upon the foundations that are laid, and that the seed falls on.

The Sower

1. The following questions deal with “the sower” himself and the seed he is sowing.
 - a. Who does “the sower” represent?

 - b. Luke tells us that the seed is “his seed” (i.e. the sower’s seed). This is a phrase only found in Luke’s gospel, in regards to this parable. In what way must the seed be personal to the sower?

 - c. What lessons can we learn from this? (i.e. how can we make the message we are sowing our own personal message – without taking away from the fact that indeed it is God’s message?)

 - d. The sower sows seed across his whole field, on all types of soil. What can we learn from this?

The Seed

2. The following questions concern the seed that is being sown.
 - a. Look at Luke 8:11, Matthew 13:19, and Matthew 24:14. In your own words describe what the seed being sown represents.



- b. How is a seed a very apt and effective symbol for what it represents?

 - c. 1 Peter 1:23 & James 3:17-18 (in translations other than the KJV) use the figure of the seed. Note the characteristics of it from these passages.

 - d. The Seed is one – just as the gospel message, although made up of many aspects, is still one. Why might it be important for sowers of the word to recognize that the seed they are sowing is a single seed, especially in light of the teaching that some people hold that only certain aspects of the truth are important, and others are not?
3. What do the four types of people represented by the four types of ground all have in common with each other?

The Pathway (Luke 8:5,12)

4. There are three negative influences which prevent the Word from taking root in these people. The first is that the pathway itself is solid ground and can't receive the seed into it.
- a. A pathway is not natural, but is formed over time through the constant treading on it by individuals. Likewise, people are not born with a disinterest in the truth – how is that formed? (i.e. how does their heart become hardened?)

 - b. Provide two examples in scripture of people who's hearts were hardened to the things of the truth:

- c. Knowing that the various grounds/soils represent the heart of an individual (Luke 8:12), what type of heart or individual would you say the pathway represents?

5. The second influence is that the seed is “trodden down”
 - a. “Trodden down” is a phrase used four times in the New Testament, three of them implying rudeness and insult, (Matt. 5:13; 7:6; *Luke 12:1*; 2 Peter 2:2). What sort of negative influence is this “treading down” referring to?

 - b. Matthew and Mark do not mention this influence in their gospels, yet Luke does. Given that Luke is a physician, and not just of the physically sick, but also of the spiritually sick, why do you think he specifically makes mention of this influence?

6. The third influence is that of the seed being devoured by the fowls of the air.
 - a. From verse 12, as well as from Matthew and Mark’s accounts, what are the fowls said to represent, and who are these figures symbolic of? (2 Thess. 2:9)

 - b. When do these “fowls of the air” come – before or after a person has come to accept and believe the truth, and what effect do they have on this individual?

 - c. Why do people so keenly accept their message and not the truth? (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

7. Given what we know about people of the wayside...
 - a. Often, people new to the truth are perplexed at how few the number of people are that actually know and accept the truth. Should we expect a lot of response to the message we bring, especially in light of the fact that we are living in the last days? (2 Tim. 3:1-8)

 - b. Based on this aspect of the parable, as parents, why is it so important to bring up a child in the love and admonition of the truth and to remove them as best we can from the influences of the world?

8. Provide an example of someone from scripture that would be a good example of the seed falling on the pathway / wayside?

The Stony / Rock Ground (Luke 8:6,13)

In this next condition, the seed falls upon stony ground. We are told that these individuals, like those on the pathway, hear the Word, but in this condition they also believe it and accept it joyfully – at least for a time.

9. If you were a sower watching the growth of the seed, would you initially be able to tell the difference between the growth of this seed and the growth of the seed in good ground? What is the implication of this in ecclesial life?

10. Luke does not mention the external influence that causes the ground to dry up. Matthew and Mark however tell us that it is the effects of the sun. Matthew and Mark say that the sun represents trials, affliction, and persecution; while Luke says that they represent temptations.
 - a. How are trials and temptations related to one another? Provide a scriptural example.

- b. The sun is absolutely vital to growth, just as trials, persecutions, and afflictions are absolutely necessary for the development of the truth in our lives (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7). Why do you think then that Luke specifically omits mention of the sun and only mentions temptations?
11. What two things does Luke say resulted from the existence of the stones / rock in these peoples heart, that prevented them from overcoming the temptations? (Luke 8:6,13)
12. What lesson is there in this for how we are to overcome trials and temptations?
13. Luke says that the result is that they “fall away”. Look up the phrase elsewhere in the New Testament. Is this a partial falling away or a complete falling away from the truth?
14. In Luke 18:18-23 we have a very good example of the seed falling on stony ground. In this example a believer comes to Christ with joy, but because of miss-conceptions about the truth, he falls away. From this it is clear that stones are false beliefs / miss-conceptions that people have about the truth which cause them to leave when they are brought to light. What was the stone or rock in this man’s heart and how did the truth offend him?
15. Stones appear in Isaiah 5:2. When are stones supposed to be removed from the ground, and what is the implication in the parable of the Sower?

16. Luke uses a different word for the stony ground – he uses the word ‘rock’ (Strong’s #4073 – “Petra”). This word is used by Luke in only one other place in his gospel – Luke 6:48, in the parable of the Two Builders. Luke seems to go out of his way here to draw out attention back to this account. What connection can we draw between these two passages?
17. What are some stony beliefs that a person may have that would prevent them from appreciating some of the principles of the truth, but allow them to appreciate enough of it so that they are able to be baptized?
18. Thinking about the garden analogy and a plant growing in these conditions, along with what Luke has told us about roots and moisture, what practical things (if any) can be done to try and help our brothers and sisters in these circumstances?

The Thorny Ground (Luke 8:7,14)

19. Luke adds three phrases in his account of the Thorny ground, which Matthew and Mark do not include. Briefly explain what each of these three phrases tells us:
- a. “Go Forth” (8:14) –

 - b. “With it” (8:7) –

 - c. “To perfection” (8:14) –

20. Luke tells us that the thorns represent the “cares, riches, and pleasures of this life”.

The Cares:

a. What does the word “cares” mean? Provide 2 other passages from Luke’s gospel where cares of this world are warned about and explain the warning in each.

b. What exhortation does Peter give in 1 Peter 5:7?

c. Explain how the cares of this world are a thorn in the life of a believer.

The Riches:

d. Where else in the gospel of Luke is warning given about riches / wealth?

e. Sodom was condemned for her riches in Ezekiel 16:49. After considering this passage, and the surrounding verses, what sort of mindset do riches produce that we should be aware of?

f. What exhortation does Paul give in 1 Timothy 6:17-19 concerning riches?

g. In 1 Tim. 6:17, Paul specifically mentions “uncertain riches” which people put their trust in. In our day this very well describes such activities as the stock market, lotteries, gambling, pools, etc. How might activities such as these be a thorn in the life of a believer?

NOTE: Riches will be covered to a fuller extent under the third theme of materialism.

The Pleasures of this Life:

- h. List 5 things the world has invented that we may have or may participate in that are specifically designed to bring the “pleasures of this life”?
 - i. How can the pleasures of this life be a thorn in the life of a believer? Describe what sort of mindset they produce. (See Titus 3:3)
 - j. Not only are we commanded in scripture not to partake of, or participate in the pleasures of this life, but what further commandment is given in Romans 1:32, concerning these unlawful works of the flesh?
21. Luke specifically says that the thorns grow up “with” the good seed. From the way Luke describes this, the weeds are not in existence when the seed is sown, but rather grow up later. As anyone with experience in a garden will know, when a seed first shoots up through the ground, it is not only hard to distinguish between the good seed and the weeds, but the weeds do not initially seem harmful.
- As such, younger and inexperienced sowers may be more inclined to let the weeds grow a bit until they can clearly be distinguished as harmful, whereas older and more experienced sowers can easily tell the difference and will advise to deal with them early.
- How can we apply these simple principles from the garden analogy to the meaning of the parable and how we are to deal with weeds in our life?

22. Identify some cares, riches, and pleasures that are thorns in your life

23. If a weed is allowed to grow too far, what effect would it have on the good seed both above ground and below ground? Is it possible to even pull the weeds roots out of the ground without damaging the good seed? (See Matt. 13:29). In your answer, comment on the applications of this to the thorns in your life, and to how and when they should be dealt with.

24. The effect of these things causes the believers fruit not to develop to perfection (Luke 8:14). What does John the Baptist say will happen to everyone who does not bring forth fruit to perfection? (Luke 3:9)

The Good Ground (Luke 8:8,15)

25. Contrast the good ground with the other types of ground.

a. What specific similarities exist between them, or between some of them?

b. What specific differences exist between them, or between some of them?

26. The Word of God is received in an honest and good heart.

a. What does the word “honest” (Strong’s #2570) mean and how is it applied practically in the life of a believer? (consider how it is used in Luke 3:9 and 6:43).

- b. What does the word “good” (Strong’s #18) mean and how is it applied practically in the life of a believer?
27. These individuals “keep it” -
- a. What do you think the phrase “keep it” means in a practical sense? (Look at the meaning of the word in Strong’s, how its translated in other versions, and how its used in Hebrews 3:6, 3:14, and 10:23)

 - b. Can you draw any similar lessons / parallels between “keeping” the Word and building our house on the rock from the previous parable?
28. This individual “brings forth fruit”. What is this fruit that we are to bring forth and how is it obtained? (Galatians 5:22-24)
29. This fruit is brought forth “with patience” (Strong’s #5281).
- a. What is the Stong’s definition of this word?

 - b. In Revelation 14:12 we are given a practical example of the patience / perseverance that is required of Saints. What is it that they did, what did they have to overcome, and why did they have to have patience in their lives?

30. Both Matthew and Mark remark that there are some believers that “bring forth thirtyfold, some sixty, and some one hundredfold”. Luke does not - he simply mentions that the faithful “bring forth one hundredfold”. Come up with a couple of good reasons why Luke may record it this way? - What point might he be trying to emphasize, and what exhortation can we take from Luke?

31. (Advanced question) In Genesis 26:12, Isaac sows a field and reaps an hundredfold. It just might be possible that Luke only mentions an hundredfold in order to draw our minds back to this particular account. Read Genesis 26:1-6, 12-13 and see if you can come up with what lessons might be here in this event that relate to the bringing forth of fruit.

Theme 2 – The Atonement & Its Application

The Good Samaritan, The Pharisee & The Publican, The Two Debtors

Our understanding of the atonement has been, and continues to be, one of the defining doctrines of our community, as it is a subject that has been completely miss-construed and miss-understood by the large majority of Christendom. And yet, as we know, it is one of the fundamental elements of the foundation principles of our faith. A correct understanding of this subject is vital for salvation. And as we saw in our last section, the things which we believe are not simply to be academic points of knowledge, but are doctrines which must be translated into action – so that the things which we believe are reflected within our lives. The doctrine of the atonement is no exception to this, and the parables which we will consider in this section will teach us not only about what Christ has done for us in his sacrifice, but will teach us about how we should respond in turn to that great act of love that has been shown towards us.

As we will see, love is one of the defining features of the atonement. It began with an act of love on God's part – the initiative towards reconciliation was God's, and love was the motivating factor. And it demands that we show love in turn, not just to God and Christ, but to all our brethren and to creation as a whole. John instructs us, "beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

The two parables which we will consider in this section are The Good Samaritan, and The Pharisee & The Publican. The first of these provides us with a beautiful picture of man's complete and utter need for Christ, of what he has done for us, and teaches us about what our response should be in turn. The Pharisee and the Publican will teach us of what our mindset should be both in worship and daily life in the realization of the great need we are in. For those who wish to do further study in this section, additional questions on the parable of The Two Debtors will be available online, and this parable not only reminds us of our need for repentance, but also considers what our attitude should be toward repentant sinners.

Each of these three parables was given by Christ in response to an individual who believed in justification by the works of the law, and who needed to understand that there was nothing that a man can do to earn salvation, for it is a gift of God. It is only through belief in the salvation of God - a belief seen in action, and a humble trust in His mercy, that a man can truly look forward to a place in that glorious Kingdom to come.

"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" ~ Lam. 3:26.



The Good Samaritan ~ Luke 10:25-37

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one which teaches us about the need to openly reflect Christ in our lives, and to manifest the same love towards others as he and his Father have manifested unto us. The lawyer asked, “what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” and in response the answer is given that we must “love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind; and our neighbour as thyself”. In the parable Christ will bring together these two ideas to teach us that love of God and love of neighbour are not two totally distinct things, but rather intrinsically woven together so that the one is inseparable from the other.

1. The basis for the giving of this parable is found in Luke 10:25-29. We are told that the lawyer “tempted” Christ and was “willing to justify himself”.
 - a. What does this tell us about his character?

 - b. After considering how this lawyer thought about himself and specifically his need for salvation, explain what this lawyer needed to learn? (1 Cor. 10:12)

2. The lawyer asks Christ, ‘who is my neighbour?’ A careful consideration of verse 36 will show that Christ portrays the lawyer as the man in the parable who fell among the thieves.
 - a. Why would Christ relate the lawyer to this person in the parable? i.e. what important fact was it showing him?

 - b. In what way was this lawyer in need like the injured man on the road?

 - c. Who or what do the thieves represent in the lawyers life?

 - d. If the man in the parable represents the lawyer, then who is the good Samaritan in the lawyers life who shows him love, mercy, and compassion and ultimately heals him?

We have seen thus far that the lawyer was in need of salvation and that the only one who could provide it to him was Christ. We are now going to relate this whole parable to mankind's need in general for salvation and the salvation which is found only in Christ.

3. The parable begins, “and a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho...”
 - a. What would the words “go down” seem to indicate on a spiritual level? Provide at least one other example of this phrase being used in this way.

 - b. When did mankind “go down”?

 - c. The man leaves behind him the city of Jerusalem. Thinking about all that Jerusalem stands for and represents (especially in Rev. 22:2), when did mankind figuratively leave “Jerusalem”?

 - d. Knowing that Christ (the Samaritan) traveled the same road as everyone else in the parable, what does the path that this man walks down represent?

 - e. (Optional) We considered the path in the parable of the Sower. Can you think of any links / similarities between them that would enhance our understanding of this parable?

4. The man falls among thieves which strip him of his garments, wound him, and leave him as good as dead. If the man is representative of mankind, and Christ is the Samaritan, then who / what do the thieves represent?

5. From Revelation 19:8 and 16:15, what do garments / raiment represent in scripture?

9. Love, mercy, and compassion are the three characteristics that drove this Samaritan to action. (Luke 10:27, 33, 37)
 - a. Look up the word “compassion” in Strong’s along with other references using the same word and briefly describe what it means to have compassion on someone?

 - b. Give two other examples of this compassion in the Gospel of Luke:

 - c. How does Christ have compassion on us? (Heb. 4:15)

 - d. How has God shown mercy towards us? (Eph. 2:3-7; Titus 3:4-7)

10. List seven things that the Samaritan does to help the man in need:

11. Refer back to question 10 and pick four things from the list of seven, and state how Christ did them for mankind. Provide scriptural references for two of them. (Hint: See Psalm 103)

12. Consider the use of the oil and wine:

a. Why would he use oil and wine on his wounds?

b. What does oil and wine represent in scripture?

c. How does Christ heal us with oil and wine?

13. Explain how the inn the man is brought to is a good picture of the ecclesia? Note any lessons for ecclesial life we can take from this analogy.

We can see from verse 36 that the certain man's neighbour in the parable was the good Samaritan. The lawyer had asked Christ, "who is my neighbour?" From the parable we learn that Christ was his neighbour. We've also seen that mankind's neighbour is Christ. The key principle that both the lawyer and all mankind first had to recognize though is that we are all in need of salvation. It is only after receiving of the love, mercy, and compassion of Christ that we are given the command "go and do thou likewise".

14. Read 1 John 4:9-11, 21.

a. What is John's primary reason for why we should love our neighbour?

b. How does John link together our love for God and our love for our neighbour? (v21)

15. Consider the love we are to show towards those outside the faith (i.e. consider the man on the road now as being the people in the world around us).
- a. Are we responsible for manifesting God and Christ's love just to those within the ecclesia or to those in the world around us as well? (Gal. 6:10)

 - b. Provide two ways in which God manifests His love towards everyone in the world? (Romans 5:8; Matthew 5:43-48)

 - c. Ultimately, what is the greatest way we can show love for those in the world around us (and thereby manifest what Christ has done for us)?

 - d. Sometimes in our preaching and in our dealing with people who have had very sketchy pasts, we can be like the Priest and Levite and try and keep a great distance away from them. How is this attitude towards people afflicted with sin contrasted with that of the Samaritan / Christ?
16. Consider the love we are to show towards those who have left or are leaving the household of faith and wandering back to the world (i.e. consider the man on the road now as being a brother or sister who has left the truth)
- a. In what way could we now consider these brothers and sisters as "going down" and leaving "Jerusalem" behind them?

 - b. Read 2 Peter 2:12-22. Describe how a person that falls away from the truth is stripped of his garments, wounded, and left for dead by the thieves in this world?

 - c. From 2 Peter 2:19, what is the false promise that draws people away from the truth?

- d. As we try to manifest the character of the Samaritan, what is our responsibility towards those who have left the truth?
17. Consider the love we are to show towards those who are within the ecclesia and are in physical need.
- a. From 1 John 3:16-18 and Matthew 25:34-40 how are we to show love towards a brother in need?

 - b. What important principle does Christ bring out in Matthew 25:40?
18. James 2 seems to be a commentary on this parable. Bearing in mind that our neighbour is anyone – what main ideas and principles come out of James 2 concerning the following things? Note how they are exemplified in the parable.
- a. Showing partiality

 - b. The extent to which we help a neighbour in need

 - c. Showing mercy

 - d. Faith and works

The Pharisee & The Publican ~ Luke 18: 9-14

1. Who was the parable addressed to? What was the problem Christ wished to address?

2. Note the characteristics of the Pharisee and the Publican as brought out in this parable. Who does each represent?

3. How were publicans traditionally looked upon in the nation at that time and why?

4. There are four other references to Publicans in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 3:12-13; 5:27-30; 7:28-35; 15:1-2).
 - a. How had some publicans responded to the teaching of the gospel?

 - b. What does Christ commend them for?

 - c. What did the Pharisees have issue with?

 - d. What message did Christ have for the Pharisees in these passages?

5. There are a number of other references to the Pharisees in Luke's gospel. Look them up and note how they are predominantly portrayed.

6. What part of God's teaching had the Pharisees failed to comprehend?

7. (Optional) The Pharisee prays to himself. There are other passages which speak of prayers that God will not hear. Note some of the reasons why God will not hear a person's prayer.

8. In reality were the Pharisees any different from the "sinners" they refused to associate with, including the publicans? (Provide references for each of the sins listed by the Pharisee)

9. What is God's view of those who condemn or despise another disciples' sincerity for the truth? (see Psalm 15:4 for example)

10. The Pharisee praised himself for paying his tithes and fasting.
 - a. What was the purpose of each as God intended them?

 - b. Where else in the gospels does Christ comment on these things in the Pharisees' religion?

11. The Publican would not lift up his eyes.
 - a. What man in the Old Testament is Christ most likely alluding to?

 - b. Why would this man in the OT not lift up his eyes?

 - c. Faithful men like this one would often join themselves with the people in asking God for forgiveness, even though they themselves did not participate in the transgression. What other examples are there of this in scripture, and how do they contrast the attitude of the Pharisee in this parable?

OF THE FOLLOWING 3 DETAILED QUESTIONS, ANSWER 2 OF THE 3

DETAILED QUESTION 1

The Pharisee in this parable justifies himself by noting how different he was from sinners, and by noting his careful attendance to fasting and tithing.

In the ecclesia today, we often talk about how that we are God's people and are different from the world. But are we really? Is there a danger today that we could be deceiving ourselves, like this Pharisee, into thinking that we are serving God in an acceptable manner (through our attendance at meetings, and doing Bible readings, etc) when really we may not be? What is God truly looking for in us on a daily basis?

In the space provided comment on these things as they apply to you in your life, and provide and comment upon another example of this in scripture (such as the ecclesia in Laodicea or the priests in Israel during the days of Malachi). Use extra paper if needed.

“Are there no danger signals for us in the Pharisee’s attitude? To “do” the “daily readings” from the scriptures, to attend the meetings – are these actions a means to an end, or an end in itself? Is it possible to repeat the offensiveness of the Pharisee, and like him to be blind to the fault?” ~ Bro. John Carter, Parables of the Messiah.

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God”

DETAILED QUESTION 2

Christ says that the Publican went away justified. Look up the word ‘justified’ as it is used elsewhere in the New Testament (especially in Romans and Galatians).

In the space provided, comment on what it means to be justified, how we are justified, justification by the Law of Moses, justification by faith and works, and comment on how the Pharisee understood justification as opposed to the Publican. Be sure to note how their understanding of justification impacted their thoughts, actions, and manner of worship.

DETAILED QUESTION 3

The contrast between the prayers of the Pharisee and Publican teach us about acceptable worship. Like Cain and Abel, both had come to bring their offerings to God, yet only one was accepted. Referencing the parable, in the space provided comment on what constitutes acceptable worship to God. How should we approach Him? With what mindset should we attend the Memorial Service? Is there a danger of our worship becoming merely an outward show? Be sure to reference such passages as 1 Samuel 15:22; Micah 6:8; and Malachi 1:6.

“A man whose eyes are open – a man who understands things as they are – has such a sense of the eternal power, greatness, and holiness of God, and the ephemerality and weakness and sinfulness of man, that his own attainments, however excellent by comparison with bad men, must always appear as nothing in his eyes. His own righteousness must appear to him as filthy rags in the light of the purity and power and correctness of the Spirit-nature.” ~ Bro. Robert Roberts, The Parables of Christ.

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God”

Theme 3 – Materialism

The Rich Fool, The Great Supper, The Rich Man & Lazarus

The topic of Materialism is one that needs to be looked at with a great amount of realism. Materialism may be one of the single largest threats that faces the ecclesia in these last days! Do we ever catch ourselves judging someone because of the clothing that they wear, or the amount of money that they have? This is because the world around us has nothing to fill their lives with other than competition over who can have the biggest and the best; and it is all too easy for us as Christadelphians to get wrapped up in what we have, rather than what we have become.

The world makes such light of the fact that it is driven by materialism. This is evident in the act of saying “she is such a material girl”. As Christadelphians, we too can get caught up in the obsession over material goods. If we do we may become a selfish and self-centered group of people, only looking out for our own needs, rather than thinking about the welfare of less fortunate brethren and sisters. In the Olivet prophecy Jesus warned his faithful disciples be ready for his return which could happen at any time. We are not to allow the cares of this life or the deceitfulness of riches to blind us so that we are not ready for our Lord’s return.

In this section then, we will be considering three parables that have to do with materialism – The Rich Fool, The Great Supper, and the third which will be found on the internet, The Rich Man & Lazarus. These parables will force us to consider how we spend our money, and how we spend our time. There is very little in this life that we can give to God except for our time and our energy. So if our answer to these questions is, ‘after worldly pursuits’, then hopefully we’ll be encouraged to shift our focus to the things of God.

So as we consider this topic of materialism, may God help us to carefully examine ourselves, and more importantly, to help us apply the lessons from these parables in our lives.



Materialism ~ Introductory Questions

1. Find a definition for the word ‘materialism’.
2. Would you consider yourself to be materialistic? Why or why not?
3. At what age do children comprehend the concept of mine versus yours?
4. What causes materialism?
5. Is the world consumed by materialism? Explain.
6. What affect does materialism have on your faith?
7. Do you believe that materialism is a problem of our generation? Or something that appears through all of the scriptures? (i.e. Joseph’s Brethren, Judas) Explain.
8. What is your attitude towards giving to the ecclesia? What should it be?
9. Will we be judged for how we spend our money? Provide a verse.

The Rich Fool ~ Luke 12:16-32

1. Why do you feel that Christ took the time to give a parable about the topic of Materialism? Is it probable he knew that this would become an issue for generations to come?
2. Who is Christ telling the parable to? (Luke 12:1,13)
3. What is the reason for the giving of the parable? Are we ever concerned with our inheritance or what is coming to us? (v13-15)
4. Luke 12:15 is perhaps the best verse on this problem. In your own words describe what verse 15 means and then list five places where you could use Jesus telling you this in your own life. (i.e. working late instead of attending Bible Class!)
5. Money is a very sensitive issue, especially regarding how much we give. In the Old Testament the Children of Israel were to give a tenth of their earnings (Num. 18:20-24). In the New Testament we see that our Lord Jesus Christ had virtually no natural possessions. Perhaps even larger, we see the theme that everything belongs to God. Do you give enough to the truth? Is it even yours to give? Are there more ways to give than financially?
6. What could the ground in the parable represent in our life?
7. The word for “certain” (Strong’s #5100) in verse 16, would seem to apply to anyone. What point is Christ trying to get across here?

8. a. How can we tell by careful reading in verse 16 that this man was already rich?
 - b. What insight does this give us about his attitude in regards to life and money? (Hint: look up “rich man” in a concordance and see what they say about the rich)
9. What other people were rich in the scriptures and what was their attitude towards money?
10. If you received a large amount of money do you feel your attitude would change towards family, friends, and your spiritual life?
11. Did the man in the parable have any control over whether his ground brought forth plentifully or not? What lesson or principle could we draw from this in our own circumstances of life?
12. In verses 17-19 count and Bible mark the number of times the words “I”, “he”, or “me”, are used in these verses. What is the general frame of mind that is immediately set forward about this man?
13. What other examples do we have in scripture of people who were of this character and only worried about themselves? (see Daniel 4:30-31 for one example)
14. What one thing did the man forget to do when he received this blessing? Give two examples of people in the scripture that upon receiving a blessing immediately stopped and gave thanks to God?

15. Verses 17-19 describe the reaction of this man to these circumstances. What is the problem with being so wrapped up with our accomplishments in this world? (See Luke 12:31, Heb. 13:5-6)

16. Look up the phrase in verse 17, “Bestow all my fruit” in a few different translations. What words would best describe this phrase today in our lives (seeing that most of us are not farmers)?

17. In the parable the man seems to have a very selfish and humanistic outlook. Does materialism breed selfishness?

18. Is there room in God’s Kingdom for people who can not get over their own accomplishments and pride? (Luke 12:18; Revelation 3:17-19; Proverbs 3:5-11)

19. In view of the fact that this man’s produce would be used not only for his own family, but also sold to others in order to provide money for his family...
 - a. How much time in a day do you spend wondering about money and the pursuit of having more? (Building bigger barns in our minds)

 - b. In verse 19 this man seems to be very happy. Are we being fooled into the idea that money can bring happiness?

20. Verses 18-19 show a large amount of self-trust and self-worth that this man had. Psalm 62:10-11 is an excellent verse on how we should act when we are blessed with riches. Can you find more verses along these lines and in putting our trust in God? (Hint: Look at cross-references and The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge. A good example is that of Abraham.)

21. This man “laid up his goods for many years”. Is it wrong to plan for retirement? What is the Godly principle? Please provide verses from scripture. (Consider everything in moderation)
22. Define the word ‘rich’ in under 10 words. The word rich is used all through scripture. Please look up Colossians 3:16. Can you think of any more verses related to spiritual riches?
23. In verse 19 the man “takes his ease”. Look up Ecclesiastes 11:9. What are your thoughts on taking it easy and not working? What can it cause to happen in our spiritual lives? Please provide verses to back up your view.
24. In verse 19 we see the phrase, “eat, drink, and be merry”. Where else in the scriptures does this phrase appear? Note whether it is in a good context or bad. (See Proverbs 31:4-7) What can we learn from this?
25. In Luke 17:28 Christ describes the activities of Sodom. Note how each of them was apparent in the life of the man in the parable.
26. In verse 20 we see the phrase, “thou fool”. This phrase is also used throughout scripture. Look at Proverbs 28:26, and 29:11. What is foolishness? Find verses to support your answer.
27. What does the phrase “this night thy soul shall be required of thee” mean?

28. This man thought that he was in control of his life until God required it! Do we remember that it is God's will that will be played out in our life, especially when it comes to our financial situation and success? (See James 1:10-11 & 4:14, and provide other verses on God's will.)
29. Do we lay aside our spiritual life because of schooling or work, like this man did for riches in verse 21? If we do, what affect will this have on our spiritual life?
30. Look up the word "required" in Strong's (#523). Have you thought about the fact that God will only demand back what is already his? What impact should there be on us knowing that we are God's and everything in our life as well?
31. "Whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Do we consider what would happen to our worldly possessions upon death? Whose are these things anyways? (See Psalm 50:10-12).
32. In verse 21, how would you describe "laying up treasure for yourself" in your life?
33. What does it mean to be "rich toward God"?
34. Consider where the boundary is between "laying up treasure" and "being rich toward God" through looking at the following verses. Write a sentence beside each describing what they tell us about their relationship:
- a. 1 Timothy 6:17-19

 - b. James 2:5

 - c. Job 1:3; 42:12

d. 1 Kings 10:14-29; 11:1-11

e. Genesis 24:35

35. In Luke 12:22-23, why do you think it says that Christ starts speaking to his disciples?

36. Is it possible for us to take no thought for our life today? Explain. (See Phil. 4:6)

37. How does verse 23 apply to today? Put it in your words. (See Deut. 8:11-18)

38. What is the major theme from verses 24-28?

39. The ravens, the lilies, and the grass are mentioned in these verses. What is mentioned about each, and what lessons are we taught from each for today?

Example	What Does God Do For Them?	What Does God Do For Us?
Ravens (12:24)		
Lilies (12:27)		
Grass of Field (12:28)		

40. The Raven was an unclean animal. Where else in scripture are ravens mentioned? What spiritual lessons do we find with ravens?

41. Luke 12:25-26 – Do we concern ourselves with things that are out of our control? Why?

42. Grass is a large theme in scripture, and hopefully this chart will help illustrate this. Fill in the chart concerning grass in scripture.

Grass	Theme of Verse	What Can We Learn From This?
1 Peter 1:24-25		
Psalms 103:15		
James 1:10-11		
Psalms 102: 4, 11		

43. Verses 29-32 provide the answer to the parable.

- a. What is the conclusion?

- b. Does it mean that we will receive all these things if we follow God?

- c. In your view what are “all these things” referring to in verse 31?

- d. We know that God provides for us, but do we see it as not being enough in worldly standards?

- e. For those who struggle with materialism, what is the hope that Christ reminds them of in these verses, that they should consider in order to keep them from falling into the trap of materialism today?

44. Overall the parable teaches us that leaving worldly pursuits and following God first is the correct principle. When faced with the same questions from our Lord Jesus Christ as the young rich man in Luke 18:23-26, what will our reaction be?

The Great Supper ~ Luke 14:15-24

1. Where does this parable take place? (see 14:1)
2. What does it mean “blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God” (v15)?
3. Is this parable speaking about the Kingdom age because of what is said in verse 15?
4. Who is the “certain man” spoken of in verse 16, and in what other parable does he show up representing the same?
5. What is the Great Supper mentioned in this verse? Where else is it mentioned in scripture?
6. This parable as recorded in Luke seems to be applying to the Kingdom Age, whereas the account of this parable in Matthew’s Gospel (Matt. 22:2-14) seems to be speaking about the nation of Israel. What is your view of this? In view of the other changes we have already seen that Luke has made in his gospel (in the Sower and Two Builders parables), why might this change in application be made by Luke?
7. Who are the many that are bade in v16?

8. Verse 16 seems to be referring to the judgment. Beside each of the following verses to do with the judgment, write down what principles we can draw from them which are applicable to today:
 - a. Hebrews 10:26-27

 - b. Revelation 14:7

 - c. 1 Peter 4:17-18

 - d. 1 Timothy 5:2

9. Who are “the servants” that are referred to in verse 17? Provide verses to support your answer.

10. What is the “supper time” that is referred to in this verse?

11. Have you been bidden to this same supper? Why or why not?

12. This verse can be an obvious link to us being taken for the Kingdom, and it speaks of things being made ready. What things do we have now that need to be made ready before we can be taken to judgment? Please provide verses.

13. How many times does the word “I” appear in verses 18-20? (You may want to consider underlining these occurrences in your Bible) and why is “I” such a good word to use in reference to Materialistic ways in our life?

14. It is very interesting to consider that both this parable and that in Luke 12 deal with the word “I”. Do we sometimes get carried away with talking about “I”?

15. The word “all” in verse 17 seems to imply that there are very few, if any, awaiting the great supper – the Lord’s Return.
- Do you feel that materialism is having an impact on the truth, and especially upon our anticipation of Christ’s return? Ephesians 1:17-20

 - Does materialism force us to be more involved with the world?
16. Consider the first excuse in verse 18...
- Do you feel that “the piece of ground” represents actual property or something else?

 - Would you have a problem leaving your land, houses, or possessions when our Lord Jesus Christ returns? Philippians 4:19

 - List two or three examples of people that get into trouble with real estate in scripture and what we can learn from their mistakes.

 - Should we own a house or property as Christadelphians today? Provide verses for your answer.

 - We need to remember that when we are taken to judgment it will not only be our things that we will be forced to leave behind, but our activities as well. List five things that you would not be able to finish in this life if you were taken right now. In comparison to the Kingdom, do these things seem as important as we might make them?

 - We see an interesting saying at the end of the verse: “I pray thee, have me excused”. It was not the master that drove them away from the supper, but rather the man himself. What does this mean for us today?

17. Consider the second excuse in verse 19...

- a. Not many of us would have problems with wanting to buy livestock today! So what would be the equivalent in our life?

- b. Livestock for a farmer was his source of income. Do we have problems with keeping work at work, and school at school, or do we seem to get carried away with chasing these pursuits?

- c. Write a paragraph or two about the challenges of leaving work or an excessive amount of schooling in order to concentrate on the truth, and making the truth as much of a priority as the above two things. (Prepare to discuss this in your discussion groups).

d. The following seven verses are about money and income. Decide whether you think that the Bible is positive on the subject or negative, and then what we can learn from each.

Verses	Positive / Negative	What We Can Learn
Luke 8:14		
Eccl. 5:13-14		
Luke 19:15-28		
John 2:14		
1Tim. 6:7-11		
James 5:1-5		
Prov. 30:8-9		

e. What do you feel the Bible is telling us about money and our pursuit of it?

18. Consider the third excuse in verse 20...

a. Can we have the characteristics of being materialistic when we are looking for a spouse, by not looking for the right things?

b. Should our significant others ever take us away from doing the Lord's Work?

c. Beside each of the following verses, write what you feel they are telling us about dating within the truth.

i. 2 Corinthians 6:14

ii. Judges 16:16-17

iii. 1 Kings 11:1-4

d. Can you add any more verses to this list?

e. Is it wrong to date outside the truth? What principles must be upheld?

f. The man again excuses himself, "I cannot come". This shows that it was not the master's rejection of the man, but the man's rejection of the master. Do we reject God in our life?

19. We have just considered the three excuses to do with the things of this life – possessions, career, and relationships. Can you think of any more that would pull us away from the Kingdom when we are called?

20. Verses 21-23 are interesting verses, bearing in mind that we are dealing with a parable that seems to speak of the judgment and Kingdom of God. The following questions deal with these verses...

- a. Who do the poor, maimed, halt, and blind represent in verse 21?

- b. Is there other scriptures that speak of a great calling of people when Christ establishes the Kingdom?

- c. In verse 23, what is meant by “compel them to come”?

- d. Does God care how many people will be in His Kingdom?

- e. If this is referring to the judgment, then would it matter if there were people who repent at the last as compared to the people who have been following Christ for a lifetime? (Hint: See the parable of the penny in Matthew 20)

21. The parable ends in verse 24 with a warning to those that reject God in this life: “None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper”. Why is this such a warning for us?

22. How should we be changing our lives after looking at this parable?

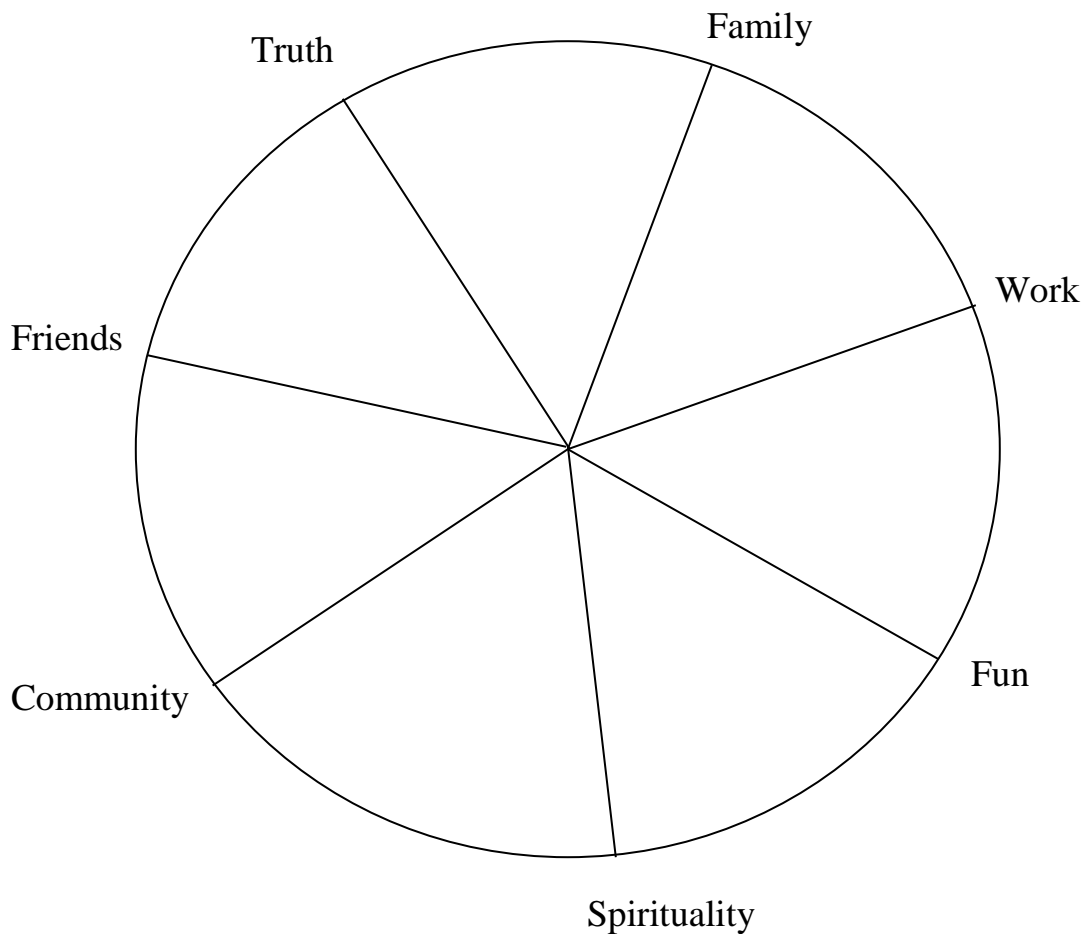
NOTE: The theme of the judgment will be picked up again under theme 5, especially in consideration of the Parable of the Pounds.

Materialism ~ Concluding Questions & Activities

1. Write a one page summary describing all the forms of materialism, how they can affect our lives both naturally and spiritually. Include areas where you are having extreme difficulty and areas where you are successful, and in these areas of success, prepare to discuss them in your discussion groups. Also include in your answer why you think Christ spoke on the topic of materialism and how it's important for us today.

2. To help you decide where your focus in this life is, please complete the following activities:

The following diagram contains seven things in life that we may find important to us (some of which should be very important to us, and others not so much). On each line running from the centre, draw a mark indicating how important that thing in life is to you, with the centre being zero (indicating no importance), and the outside being 10 (indicating that it is really important to you). After putting the marks on, connect the dots. This will help you to assess where your priorities are in life.



List the following 7 things in order of importance in your life. (Remember, this is not the order they should be in, but what you feel they are in right now in your life).

- Family
- Professional Growth
- Health & Well-being
- Financial Growth
- Social Activities
- Intellectual Growth
- Spiritual Growth

3. Now that you have assessed where your priorities are in life, you are able to change them to what they need to be.

To conclude this section, look through the three parables and pull out the key verses that you feel are helpful to remember in overcoming materialism. You may find several, so combine them together to provide yourself with a powerful exhortation. Be prepared to share the ones you find most helpful with your discussion group. (You may include verses that deal with this topic that are not found in these parables if you wish).

Theme 4 – The Parables of the Lost

The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, The Lost Sons

At one time or another, we were all lost sheep. We “were dead in trespasses and sins... fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ”, (Eph. 2:1-5). Being baptized into Christ, we have been welcomed into his fold. The good shepherd, who gave his life for his sheep, says, “I know my sheep, and are known of mine”, (Jn. 10:11,14).

But although we have been welcomed into his fold, the road to the Kingdom is not always easy, and sadly there are times when people we may know and love, just stop coming to the meeting. Perhaps they’ve just lost interest, or perhaps they feel as if they’ve been offended or let down in some way. Some, like the little lost sheep, just innocently stray from the path of righteousness, and find themselves caught up in the wilderness of this life, desperately in need of a shepherd to guide them back. There are others though, that blatantly leave in order to pursue after the riches of this world, and thereby put themselves in a position where “it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness”, (2 Pet. 2:21).

It is also true though, that just as some leave the household of faith, and are thereby lost without, there are others who are lost within the house. They may still faithfully attend ecclesial functions, and they may look like everything is fine, but deep down the gospel message has failed to take root, and like the seed that is sown among the thorns, the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world prevent any fruit being brought to perfection.

Whatever the circumstances are, these three parables not only emphasize the very sad position these individuals are in, but provide exhortation for us as well. Like the shepherd who recognized that just one of his 100 sheep had gone astray, we too must be that attentive to recognize when one of our brethren have gone missing; And just as he left the 99 behind to go in search of the one, so we too must show that amount of diligence in seeking our brethren.

May we each be moved by the message in these three parables to pray without ceasing for those of our friends, family, and loved ones, who have gone astray; and that our efforts to restore them to life may prove to be fruitful, before it becomes too late.



The Parables of the Lost ~ Luke 15:1-32

1. After reading the three parables contained in Luke 15, comment on whether you feel that these three parables should be considered as one.
2. What might be a reason for the gathering of the large crowd in 15:1? (See Luke 14:21-23, 35)
3. What two groups of people is Christ addressing in chapter 15?
4. Why were the Pharisees & Scribes murmuring (v2)? (See Matt. 23:13)
5. Provide a couple of Old Testament examples of the Children of Israel murmuring? (Hint: Look up “murmured” in a concordance)
6. What might be significant about Christ eating with the Publicans & Sinners (v2)?
7. Is there anything in the record to suggest that the parables of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin were given in response to the enticement of the Pharisees & Scribes?
8. What does it mean to be lost, and how do we become lost? (Jer. 50:6)

The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4-7)

1. Where else in the New Testament does Christ tell a story about a lost sheep? Note the differences between that parable, and the one here in Luke's account.

2. What does Matthew's record (Matt. 18:13) say instead of "until he find it" (Luke 15:4)? How does this change in wording affect us spiritually?

3. Read Ezekiel 34, and note the verses that speak of the neglect on the part of the shepherds of Israel (i.e. the Pharisees in Christ's day, who he was addressing).

4. In a first century application of this parable...
 - a. Who might the ninety nine sheep represent in this parable? (Hint: see verse 3 & Luke 5:31)

 - b. Who might the lost sheep represent? (Hint: see verse 1 & Matt. 10:6)

5. Who do you think the friends and neighbours are representing in this story? (See Job 38:7 & Luke 2:13-14)

6. What point do you feel Christ is making in verse 7? (remember the conflict here between the Pharisees & the Publicans)

Perhaps the whole entire parable comes together around the one phrase, "that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." What sweet irony Christ concludes with here in this parable. It can be pondered whether there is any joy in heaven over 99 just persons. The Pharisees were in need of repentance more than anyone, but because their attitude was wrong, Christ could not save what already felt was saved. Instead, Christ spent his time searching out the people who were truly looking for a change. What shepherd would leave ninety and nine to follow one, other than to show the relative worthlessness of the Pharisees!

This parable has more application than to just the Pharisees & Publicans. Today, the parable can be applied to the ecclesia, and the principles of this parable can be used in our search for our lost brothers and sisters.

7. In the ecclesia today...
 - a. Who might the ninety nine sheep represent? (John 10:1-5)

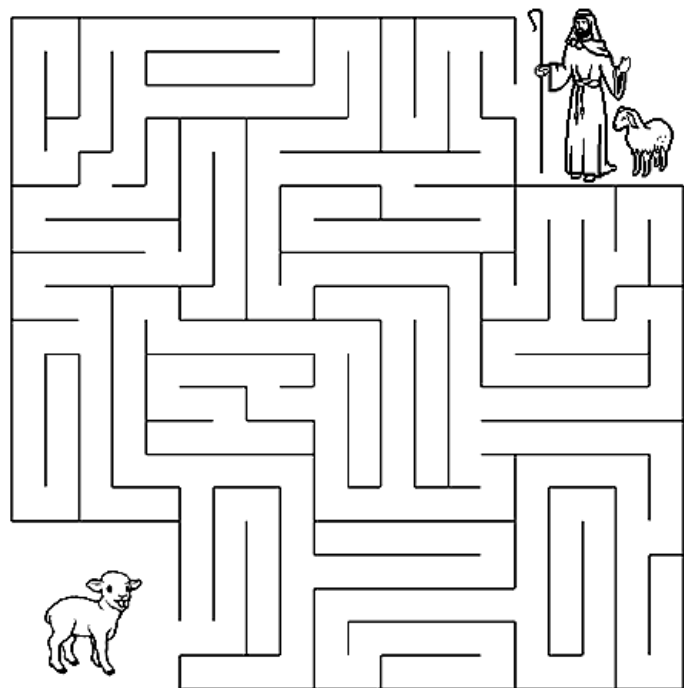
 - b. Who might the one lost sheep represent?

8. The shepherd leaves his sheep behind. What keeps the ninety nine together while he's gone?

9. What does the shepherd do when he finds the lost sheep, and what does this tell us about dealing with those individuals who have left the truth?

10. We see the attitude of the Shepherd and his friends in such phrases as: "until he find it", (v4); "layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing", (v5); "calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'rejoice with me'", (v6). Do you feel that this attitude is applied today within our ecclesias when someone strays from the truth?

11. In 1 Peter 2:25, we all seem to be likened to sheep that have gone astray. What does Peter tell us about ourselves?



The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

1. Who do you think the woman represents in this parable?
2. Where else has a house been used in the parables in Luke's gospel, and what has it been used to represent?
3. Why does Christ give another parable about something being lost, right after he's just given one about a lost sheep? What might the difference be? (Hint: Consider carefully the fact that the sheep is lost outside, while the coin is lost inside!) What lesson(s) can we take from this?
4. What exactly were these coins in verse 8? (See margin, and Ezek. 30:12-15)
5. Were these coins still in common use at the time of Christ? If they were not, then give a possible explanation as to what they were, and why they were so important to the woman.
6. What might "lighting the candle" (v8) represent?
7. No doubt sweeping the house is the best way to find something or somebody that is lost. However, in the process of sweeping, a lot of dust is created. What does this illustration tell us about searching out people that are lost inside the ecclesia?

8. The coin in the parable would no doubt have had the King's image and superscription on it (Luke 20:24). What comparison does that have to someone being lost within the ecclesia?

9. With careful reading we see a difference between the first parable and the second. In the first, the shepherd "finds his sheep which was lost" (v6). In the second, the woman says, "I have found the piece, which I had lost" (v9). What does this perhaps teach us about where the fault can lay when brothers and sisters either leave the truth, or are lost within the truth?

10. What type of ground in the parable of the sower is this person's heart, who is represented by the lost coin?

11. Both the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin, speak of great joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents (v7, 10). Seeing that finding our lost brothers and sisters is so important, make a point-form list of ideas that may help bring brothers and sisters back into the fold / house?



The Lost Sons (Luke 15:11-32)

1. After reading this parable, what overall lesson(s) do you gather from it?
2. Note that the first parable of the lost sheep has 1/100 lost, the lost coin has 1/10 lost, and the lost son(s) has 1/2 lost. What does this show us about each parable?
3. Like with the parable of the Lost Sheep, the different characters in this parable may be seen to represent different groups of people, depending on who it is being addressed to. The chart below highlights three groups of people it could be referring to, and in each case indicates who the younger brother would represent. Complete the chart by filling in who the older brother and father would represent in each case:

Group:	Younger Son:	Older Son:	Father:
Israel in 1 st c.	Publicans & Sinners		
The Whole Body	Gentiles		
The Ecclesia	Those who have physically left the truth		

4. Briefly describe how the Pharisees and scribes fit the characteristics of the older son, and the publicans and sinners the characteristics of the younger?
5. Briefly describe how the Jews fit the characteristics of the older son, and the Gentiles the younger? (John 10:16)
6. Describe how someone today can be lost outside the ecclesia, and how someone can be lost within the ecclesia?

7. What significance might there be in the younger son asking for his inheritance?

8. What is the inheritance that was due to the younger son, and when should he have received it?
(Gen. 25:5-6; Deut. 21:17)

9. How would the whole family have been affected by this son's demand for his inheritance? What is the lesson?

10. The father gives him it willingly, which seems very strange. What's significant about this?
(Rom. 1:21-24)

11. What do the words "took his journey" (v13) emphasize?

12. What do you think is signified in the son journeying into a "far country" (v13)?

13. Can you find any examples where the words "far away" can mean being far away from God?
(Eph. 2:16-17)

14. The word "riotous living" is an interesting word. It is used in Prov. 28:7 and 7:11. What do these passages tell us about the way he was living his life?

15. Famine seems to play a role in the outcome. Can you think of another place where a famine has caused a person to come back to God? (Gen. 41:57)

16. Amos 8:11 speaks of a famine in the land. Look up the passage and see if there is any parallel to this time in...

a. Christ's Day:

b. Our day:

17. Should natural circumstances or disasters make us think of God?

18. God has worked with other people through scripture by natural events to show them the right way. List a few.

19. Would this son's job of feeding pigs and lack of regard from friends have played a part in his change of life?

20. Do you find that we can get carried away and lost from the truth without realizing it, until something shocking happens in our life?

21. Try to think of a time(s) in your life where, like the prodigal son, you have been lost. What brought you back to the truth?

22. What does this tell us about the high / good life? (Prov. 11:4, 28; 22:16)

23. When this son had money, and was the life of the party (so to speak), he had lots of friends. Is there any difference today?

24. What does it mean to come to “himself”? (See a modern version)

25. There is no mention of any hardship in the record for the son to travel back to his father, only the action to begin. Look up the meaning of the phrase “he arose”, and where else it is used, and explain why it is so fitting here?

26. Verses 17-19 provide the younger son’s confession. The Bible teaches us that acknowledgement, repentance, and change should occur. How are these seen in this story?

	Verse	Quote
Acknowledgment:		
Repentance:		
Change:		

27. Can you find a verse(s) where we have to have these same steps in our lives to come to God? (Hint: Look up some of the key words, such as “confess” or “repent”)

28. Why was the Father looking for his son that day (v20)? (Think of God’s compassion)

29. What does this teach us about the boundaries of God’s forgiveness? (Ps. 103:8-13; 1 John 1:7,9)

30. What part of the confession did the son not get a chance to explain to his Father?

31. What significance is there in the Father’s gesture of the best robe, ring on his finger, fatted calf, etc.?

32. Can you think of any other gesture in scripture that would be the equivalent of our Father's forgiveness?

33. What can we learn from this?

34. Is there ever a point where we can be too lost from following God that we can not return?

35. What is the significance in verse 24, that the son was dead, when indeed he was still literally alive? Comment on what we can learn from this. (2 Pet. 3:18-22; Eph. 2:1)

36. Why was the eldest son so upset?

37. What do we learn about the eldest son by his actions?

38. "This thy son" (v30). He had so much hatred towards his brother, he could not call him brother. Many times we have people leave the truth because of this kind of heat between them. How can we constantly remember that these are our brethren, and that we need to hold them dear no matter what?

39. Would you say that the eldest son was withholding fellowship from his brother, who his father had forgiven?

40. Under what circumstances, if any, should we jeopardize our fellowship with our Father, and with our brothers and sisters? Provide a verse.
41. Where was the eldest brother's heart really at?
42. Can we become self-righteous because the path that we have taken to the Kingdom may have been a little straighter than someone else who was lost and returned to God? Explain.
43. Can this self-righteousness, as seen in the older brother, hold us out of the Kingdom?
44. This parable speaks about two sons and their distinct personalities. Both are lost – one away from home, and one at home. Can this happen to us in the meeting?
45. Is there anyone in the ecclesia, who does not have a bit of both personalities in their lives?
46. "Son, you are ever with me" (v31). Write down two passages that show that God cares for us and is always there for us.
47. What should our attitude be towards brothers and sisters that are lost and are returning, and as lost brothers or sisters coming back? (Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2:6-8)

Note: This theme is also covered in the parable of the Two Debtor's questions, available online.

48. “He was lost and is found” (v32). In the other two parables, the shepherd and the woman searched for what was lost. Do you think that this phrase infers that the father searched for his son? Why or why not. Draw spiritual principles from your answer.
49. This parable seems to have its roots in the Old Testament, such as Hos. 7:8-10 or Gen. 38. Can you think of any other links, and how these passages might relate to the two sons?
50. The parable finishes without an ending. What do you think Christ was saying to the people he was addressing the parable to?
51. Write an essay to describe and summarize what you have learned from all three parables on being lost. Try to tell how an application of these in your everyday life is essential. (Use extra paper if necessary)



Theme 5 – The End of an Age

The Husbandmen in the Vineyard, The Fig Tree, The Pounds

In the days of Noah, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,” (Gen. 6:5). Man had corrupted his way upon the earth, and the earth was filled with violence. The ecclesia of Noah’s day was not immune from this corruption, but they too had lapsed into a sad state of apathy and acceptance of evil, so that only Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Judgment was thus inevitable. It was pronounced, and it came to pass. And in the space of just 40 days, the antediluvian age came to an end.

Many years later, in the days of our Lord’s ministry, another age was now drawing to a close. The nation of Israel, which had already been removed once and subsequently been restored, had once again lost their spiritual perspective, resulting in an abundance of wickedness in God’s land, including a great corruption among those who held the responsibility of shepherding God’s people. So blind were they to God’s truth, that they couldn’t even recognize the promised Messiah, even with all the signs and wonders he had performed in their midst. And thus, once again judgment was pronounced, and 40 years later it came, thereby bringing an end to the Mosaic Age, with all its ritual and hypocrisy.

Today, none of us would doubt that we live in similar times. The evil in the world about us is ever increasing, and little by little it is working its way into the ecclesia, just as it did in times past. A sense of apathy and an acceptance of things, which to believers of generations past would have been unthinkable, is now slowly coming over the brotherhood. And so today we stand at the end of another age, the gentile age, and judgment both for the household and for the world at large is almost a reality. And thus, there is a great urgency to be preparing ourselves for that time, by heeding the signs that are about us indicating that it is near, and putting into practice the lessons from the word, such as we have been considering in this study of the parables.

The three parables which will be considered in this final section all have to do with the end of an age and with coming judgment. The parable of the Husbandmen in the vineyard takes us back to the days of Christ, and considers the need for judgment at that time. The parable of the Fig Tree also speaks of these things, but then catapults our minds forward, bringing us to consider the miraculous signs in our own days which profess that Christ’s coming is indeed nigh. Finally, for those who wish to do further study, the parable of the pounds will be available on the internet, which speaks to us about that coming judgment, of our attitude towards it, of what we must be doing to be preparing ourselves for it, and how the world at large will respond to it. In all of this we will seek to draw forth lessons that we can apply in our lives as we await that glorious day of Israel’s redemption.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off
the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

~ Romans 13:12 ~

The Husbandmen in the Vineyard ~ Luke 20:9-18

1. Luke 20:1-2 provide the background to this parable. Who is Christ addressing and what are they challenging him with?
2. Using the cross-references in your Bible, or a resource like The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, find three passages in the Old Testament which Christ pulls the ideas in this parable from.
3. Do some brief research on Vineyards in scripture. Using both a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia, as well as other scriptures (especially Isaiah 5), find out how a person would initially make a vineyard, for what purpose a vineyard was made, what the duties of husbandmen were in the vineyard, and what the vineyard represents in scripture.



4. Four characters (or groups of characters) are mentioned in this parable. In the space provided list everything that the parable says about these people, including what they do, how they respond, their notable characteristics, etc.
 In the right column, note who each of these characters represents. Cross-references have been provided that show matching characteristics. You can add more if you wish.

Key Characteristics	Represent
The Certain Man	(Isa. 5; Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:9-10; Exo. 34:6-7)
The Husbandmen	(Matt. 23:30-38)
The Servants	(2 Kin. 17:13-14; Jer. 25:3-7; Heb. 11:35-38)
The Beloved Son	(Phil. 2:5-8)

5. What does the parable teach us about God's character and what He expects of us?

6. What does the parable teach us about Christ's character and work?

7.
 - a. Make a list of all the things that the husbandmen could be found guilty of.

 - b. In what way were the religious teachers in Christ's day guilty of each of these things? (hint: see passages like Matt. 23; Mal. 3:5-8; Jer. 23:30-31, etc.)

 - c. In what way could the churches of Christendom today, and especially the Catholic Church, be found guilty of these same things?

 - d. In what way could we today be found guilty of the same things? (Be sure to include in your answer how we can be found guilty of putting to death the Son of God – Heb. 6:6; 10:29)

8. Who else in scripture, after being told a parable, was asked a question, and in answering it condemned themselves? (2 Sam. 12)

9. In what way was, or is, verse 16 to be fulfilled? (You may come up with a couple of different applications of it)

10. Where is Christ quoting from in verse 17, what is it referring to, and for what purpose would Christ quote it here?

11. What principle from 1 Cor. 1 is exemplified in Luke 20:17?

12. Explain the meaning of verse 18.

13. The imagery used in verse 18 (stone, broken, grind to powder), is very similar to that of Dan. 2: 34-35. How could we relate the prophecy of Daniel 2 to the ideas in this parable?

14. Refer back to question one. In what way did the parable address the original challenge put forward by the chief priests, scribes, and elders?

The Fig Tree ~ Luke 13:6-9 & 21:29-32

During Christ's ministry, there were three (recorded) occasions when he delivered parables on the fig tree – and together they tell a complete story. Two are stated in the record to be parables, the other is what may be called an acted parable – one not spoken in words, but rather in actions. The first is in Luke 13, the second in Matthew 21, and the third in Luke 21. We will look at each in turn.

1. Using an encyclopedia, Bible Dictionary, or some other resource, research the fig tree, and note the key characteristics pertaining to its growth and development. Specifically, be sure to note when the leaves and the figs appear, the difference between the first fruits and the latter fruits, when the first fruits ripen, and what it means when a fig tree has only leaves and no fruit. (Note: Answers to these questions will be important to our understanding of these parables).

2. Christ picks up the symbol of the fig tree from the Old Testament. Note where in the Old Testament the fig tree is used in symbol, and what it is used to represent. (Hint: Look up “fig tree” in a concordance, or look at cross-references)

3. Where else in scripture are trees used to represent nations and people?



The Cursing of the Fig Tree - Matthew 21:18-19

8. Where had Christ been the day before the fig tree was cursed, and what significant event took place there? Note when Christ had done this before, and how it demonstrated the principle of God's forbearance and ultimate judgment seen in the parable of Luke 13.

9. Based on your study of fig trees in question 1, why did Christ curse the fig tree and what was that cursing figurative of?

“This fig tree, precociously putting out its leaves, gave every promise therefore of figs: but it had none. There was profession but not practice: it was a fit symbol of the deceitful and hypocritical attitude of one with moral pretensions but of immoral ways. It illustrated a religious pretence; it was a picture of delusion and sham... the fig tree by the wayside was a symbol of the nation of Israel.” (J. Carter ~ Parables of the Messiah)

10. Hypocriticalness was a serious problem in the nation at that time. What is hypocriticalness, what did Christ have to say about it in Matthew 23, and how can it impact us?

11. Christ had called the temple “a den of thieves”. In what way were the religious leaders at that time thieves? Consider the way in which they had stolen from the people, and the way in which they were guilty of stealing directly from God, and how this may impact us today.

NOTE: We do not have space to look at it here, but for anyone wishing to do further study, you may wish to consider Zechariah chapter 5, where in the vision of the flying scroll Israel's sins under the Mosaic age were foretold, and in the vision of the flying Ephah the sin of Israel was taken away in judgment and transferred to Shinar (figurative of Babylon the Great). Today, the sin of Israel is seen in Catholicism and in her harlot daughters, making these warnings from Christ very relevant to us today. For more on this, see Bro. John Carter's book, “Prophets After the Exile”.

Conclusion

12. The fig tree withered in AD70. This is described in Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20. Do some brief research into the events at that time. Note what took place in the nation, specifically in regards to what happened to Israel as a nation, Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish people, and explain how God had given His people a way of escape at that time.

(Information on this time can be found on the internet, or at the end of Bro. Robert Roberts book, The Ways of Providence. For a more extensive exposition on this time, see Bro. John Thomas' book, The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth, available online at www.christadelphianbooks.org)

13. Most of Christendom today would tell us that God's cursing of the fig tree was final, and that his purpose with the nation of Israel is over. Prove from scripture that this cannot possibly be the case, and describe how the gospel message is inseparable from Israel. (Hint: See Romans 9-11).



The Shooting Forth of the Fig Tree - Luke 21:29-32

14. Refer back to question 3. What do “all the trees” represent?

15. The fig tree and the other trees “shoot forth”. What passages in scripture use similar language and what is it symbolic of? (hint: look up “shoot forth” and other similar phrases in a concordance)

16. In what major Old Testament prophecy describing the restoration of Israel is something that has dried up (withered), returned to life? (Ezek. 37)

17. When do you think Israel “shoot forth”? (Carefully consider Ezekiel 36:8-11)

18. Luke is careful to point out that other trees shoot forth at this time as well. What other nations or powers does the Bible say will return to life at the time of the end? (Rev. 17:8; Ezek. 38:4)

19. Provide a brief summary of the events leading up to the formation of the state of Israel in modern times. Make specific mention of the events that occurred in relation to this in 1917, 1948, 1967, and other events that you may feel are relevant since that time.



20. What is the exhortation of the parable of the fig tree?

21. OPTIONAL: Some of you may wish to continue your study of this parable in considering the phrase, “this generation shall not pass away until all be fulfilled”. If so, you will need to carefully consider the following:
- What is a generation in scripture? (Note: there are differing lengths)
 - At what age was a person considered to be part of “this generation”?
 - Who does “this generation” refer to?
 - What events does “all be fulfilled” refer to? (You will need to research each of the phrases in Matthew 24:30-31 and Luke 21:27 to determine what events are being spoken of).

WRITTEN 100 YEARS IN ADVANCE

“The truth is, there are two stages in the restoration of the Jews, the first is before the battle of Armageddon; and the second, after it; but both pre-millennial. God has said, “I will save the tents of Judah first”. This is the first stage of the restoration...

...There is then a partial and primary restoration of Jews before the manifestation, which is to serve as the nucleus, or basis, of future operations in the restoration of the rest of the tribes after he has appeared in the Kingdom. The pre-advantual colonization of Palestine will be on purely political principles; and the Jewish colonists will return in unbelief of the Messiahship of Jesus, and of the truth as it is in him. They will emigrate thither as agriculturists and traders, in the hope of ultimately establishing their commonwealth, but more immediately of getting rich in silver and gold by commerce with India, and in cattle and goods by their industry at home under the efficient protection of the British power. And this their expectation will not be deceived; for, before Gogue invades their country, it is described by the prophet, as “a land of unwallled villages, whose inhabitants are at rest, and dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates; and possessed of silver and gold, cattle and goods, dwelling in the midst of the land” (Ezekiel 38:11,12,13)...

...But to what part of the world shall we look for a power whose interests will make it willing, as it is able, to plant the ensign of civilization upon the mountains of Israel? The reader will, doubtless, anticipate my reply from what has gone before. I know not whether the men, who at present contrive the foreign policy of Britain, entertain the idea of assuming the sovereignty of the Holy Land, and of promoting its colonization by the Jews; their present intentions, however, are of no importance one way or the other, because they will be compelled, by events soon to happen, to do what under existing circumstances, heaven and earth combined could not move them to attempt. The present decisions of “statesmen” are destitute of stability. A shooting star in the political firmament is sufficient to disturb all the forces of their system; and to stultify all the theories of their political astronomy. The finger of God has indicated a course to be pursued by Britain which cannot be evaded, and which her counsellors will not only be willing, but eager, to adopt when the crisis comes upon them.”

Bro. John Thomas, Elpis Israel, (1848).

