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The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter Lesson 12 Dec. 23, 1900

(Or December 30; see "Christmas Lesson, 3" below.)

PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

—Luke 19: 11-27.

Read Matthew 25: 14-30.

Commit Verses 26-27.

A CHRISTMAS LESSON may be studied in either of the three ways:—

1. The Christmas Lesson may be alternative with this by the Lesson Committee (Matt. 2: 1-11).

2. Review Lesson I. and II. of first quarter.

3. Use Lesson XIII., the lesson for December 30, on this Sunday, and teach this lesson on December 30.

The review, covering the life of Christ as one whole, as the mission of the Son of God to earth, will make an excellent Christmas lesson. And the lesson appointed for to-day is a good one for the closing year.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

—Rom. 14: 12.

HISTORICAL SETTING.

Time.—The last of March, A. D. 30.

Place.—Jericho, or at near the house of Zaccheus.

Immediately following the last lesson.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES.—V. 11. And as they heard these things.

The conversation in the house of Zaccheus (vs 1-10). He added, to what he had said in the house, a parable for those who had been looking on.

Because he was nigh to Jerusalem. Fifteen to twenty miles. Jerusalem was the capital where they expect their Messiah to appear.

And because they thought that the kingdom of God. The new kingdom he had come to found. The Jews looked upon the expected Messiah as the restorer of the glory of Israel as the great world power. Should immediately appear.

That all their dreams about the kingdom were to be visibly realized, immediately and in their way.

Practical. 1. This parable was to put them on their guard against disappointment; to teach them their true way of waiting, in faithful, patient service, for the coming of the kingdom.

2. It was also a warning to the enemies of the new kingdom that if they rejected the Messiah now before them, they and their city and nation should be destroyed.

3. When men have a promise of good, they are liable to be impatient for the fulfillment of the promise. Yet every promise in every sphere is conditioned on that which must be met before the reward that follows.

THE NOBLEMAN AND HIS KINGDOM.—V. 12. A certain nobleman. One of the high rank. Went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. The kingdom was not in the far country, but at home where he lived. But he had to go where the chief authority resided, in order to be made king over the province where he would reign. And to return to the kingdom which he sought to rule.

Applications. The man of noble birth represents Christ himself, of royal blood and divine descent.

The far country represents heaven and the state of glory with his Father, where Jesus went after his death and resurrection, to remain unseen till the time of his appearing shall come.

The going was the departure of Jesus by his death, followed by his bodily absence during the time his servants were "occupying" till he returns.

The kingdom he was to receive is the kingdom of God on earth.

THE SERVANTS.—V. 13. He called his ten servants. Rather, ten of his servants. And delivered them ten pounds. One to each. The pound was Roman money then in use in Palestine, and was worth one hundred drachme or denarii (so often translated pence), or about seventeen dollars. Occupy. An occupier formerly meant a trader. They were to invest the capital. This would test their wisdom and their faithfulness.

Applications. The servants were God's professed people, the nation to whom great interest had been committed, especially the leaders.

The pounds must denote that for which men are accountable, as the words of God, the means of grace, the redemption in Jesus, the presence of the Holy Spirit, opportunities, talent, wealth, &c.

THE CITIZENS.—V. 14. But his citizens. Over whom he ruled. Hated him and sent a message after him. Rather, an embassy to follow him (14: 32). Here the incident would be entirely obscure, if we did not know from Josephus that the Jews did send an embassy of fifty to Augustus, who were met on their arrival at Rome by eight thousand Jews,—to recount the cruelties of Archelaus, and plead for deliverance from him and the

Herods generally. We will not have this man to reign over us. Twice this very declaration found utterance from their lips,—once when they cried to Pilate, "We have no king but Caesar"; and again, when they said, "Write not, The King of the Jews."

Applications. 1. The citizens represent all men over whom he is the rightful king. But they rejected him. "He came unto his own and his own received him not."

2. The message of defiance. Every prosecution of his servants, the stoning of Stephen, the beheading of Paul, and all the wrongs done to his people because they were his, were messages of defiance sent after Jesus, implicit declarations that they would not have him for their king. So men still say in their hearts to God. They will not obey, they will not submit to his authority, they will do as they please.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS AND THEIR REWARD.—Vs. 15-19. When he was returned. Having left the servants alone for some time, to test their fidelity. But the time came when due account must be rendered. Then came the first. The reports of three only are given as representatives of the whole. They pound hath gained ten pounds. In honest business he had greatly increased his capital. And he said unto him, Well, or "Well done."

Have thou authority over ten cities. Observe the contrasts, from a servant to a ruler, from a few things to many. The second came. He had less reward, but his due reward. His five cities correspond to his faithfulness and ability in using the five pounds.

Interpretation. Christ is coming again to receive his kingdom and to judge the world (Matt 25: 31-46). But not only then, but oftentimes there comes a day of judgment to nations and to individuals. The destruction of Jerusalem was one of those times; so are providential crises, and the hour of death. Every one has to give a strict account of all that God has entrusted to him.

The reward is first inward and personal, in larger capacities for usefulness and enjoyment. There is scarcely any limit to the increase which faithfulness will add to spiritual gifts. For instance, the Bible faithfully studied and obeyed unfolds treasures an hundred-fold more valuable than the careless reader can find. The same is true of salvation, of Christian experience, of time, of opportunities, of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The divine approval and favor, "Well done, good and faithful servant." What can be sweeter than the favor of God!

The pound was comparatively a small sum, but enough to test faithfulness and ability. So all we receive here is little compared with that which we receive hereafter; a little seed compared with the blooming plant that grows from it.

The authority over the ten cities means larger spheres of usefulness, increased opportunity to do good, multiplied power and influence. Faithfulness in the smaller sphere ever leads to a larger sphere, to new activities, to greater opportunities and achievements. Thus only can one become ruler over many things.

Note. All these rewards the Jews might have had had they accepted Jesus as the Messiah. This parable turns on moral quality rather than on ability. Its keynote is not ten pounds, nor one pound but faithfulness.

THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANTS AND THEIR LOSSES.—Vs. 20-26. Here is thy pound. Implying that he thought he had been scrupulously honest. Which I have kept laid up in a napkin, or "handkerchief." He claimed credit for fidelity. He did not steal his lord's money, but returned every farthing. He did not act like a timid man, but like a lazy one. For I feared thee. Lest thou art an austere man. Severe. Thus do men think of God as a hard master. Thou takest up, etc. You expected me to do the work, while you had the gains. Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee. Your own statements condemn you. Thou knowest, etc. To be read interrogatively. You knew, did you! All the more should you have been faithful. That it is a false description of me shown by my rewards to the other servants.

Wherefore then. You had no right to prevent my money from making its natural gains. Into the bank. These money-changers took money on deposit, paying interest themselves to the depositors. Mine own with usury, or interest. Not necessarily implying anything illegal or exorbitant.

The unfaithful one lost his opportunities of gaining, all the natural increase of what was entrusted to his care. Take from him the pound. He must give up that which he is unwilling to use. He stood in the way of its proper use. He was a weed in the garden,

a cumber of the ground. He lost the favor, and the friendship of his lord.

Statement of the Principle. Unto every one which hath. He only has true possession of a thing who uses its powers and forces. Even that he hath. What was entrusted to him. The opportunities pass away, the abilities diminish, the powers wane. So it will be in the spiritual world.

Sins of Omission. This man reminds us of those who are condemned in the parable of the judgment (Matt. 25: 41-46), not for positive crimes, but for refusing to do the good they might have done. We are responsible for all the good that might have flowed from our lives, had we been faithful.

THE FATE OF HIS ENEMIES.—V. 26. But those mine enemies. Who not only neglected duty, but refused to be subject to his sway. Slay them before me. There is nothing possible for those who, in spite of all warnings and all influences for good, determine to remain in sin, but to be destroyed. There was a fulfillment of this at the destruction of Jerusalem forty years later, when not a Christian perished, but more than a million of Jews were slain. And that destruction was but one example of the ruin which must follow a life of sin.

The Teaching We Do Without a Text Book.

Twenty years ago a discouraged young doctor in one of our large cities was visited by his old father, who came up from a rural district to look after his boy.

Well, son, he said, how are you getting along!

I'm not getting along, at all, was the disheartened answer. I'm not doing a thing.

The old man's countenance fell, but he spoke of courage and patience and perseverance. Later in the day he went with his son to the Free Dispensary, where the young doctor had an unslarid position, and where he spent an hour or more every day.

The father sat by, a silent but intensely interested spectator, while twenty-five poor unfortunates received help. The doctor forgot his visitor, while he bent his skilled energies to this task; but hardly had the door closed on the last patient, when the old man burst forth:

I thought you'd me that you were not doing anything! Why, if I had helped twenty-five people in a month as much as you have in one morning, I would thank God that my life counted for something.

There isn't any money in it, though, explained the son, somewhat abashed at his companion's vehemence.

Money! the old man shouted, still scornfully. Money! What is money in comparison with being of use to your fellow-men! Never mind about money; you go right along at this work every day. I'll go back to the farm and gladly earn money to support you as long as you live,—yes, and sleep sound every night with the thought that I have helped you to help your fellow-men.

That speech I said to a friend of mine, one who has spent many years as a conspicuously successful teacher, went into the bones of the young doctor's life, and strengthened him for a life of unselfish usefulness.

Ah! said the professor, that one speech was worth years of text book teaching! And yet it was made without an instant's preparation.

Far from it, I answered quickly. It had taken sixty years of noble living, struggling against sin and self, pressing forward in paths of righteousness, bearing the cross, following hard after the Perfect Man, to prepare that old Christian to make this speech. Then the moment came, and he was ready to teach the glorious lesson.

For the teaching without textbooks, fellow teachers, life's normal school holds daily, hourly classes—Elizabeth Preston Allan, in the S. S. Times.

Curious Bible Facts:

The learned Prince of Granada, heir to the Spanish throne, imprisoned by order of the crown for fear he would aspire to the throne, was kept in solitary confinement in the old prison at the Place of the Skulls, Madrid. After thirty-three years in this living tomb death came to his release, and the following remarkable researches, taken from the Bible and marked with an old nail on the rough walls of his cell, told how the boy sought employment through the weary years.

In the Bible the word Lord is found 1,853 times, the word Jehovah 6,855 times, the word reverend but once, and that in Psalms cxi. 9.

The ninth verse of the eighth chapter of Esther is the longest.

The eighth verse of the ninety-sixth Psalm is the middle verse of the Bible.

The thirty-fifth verse, eleventh chapter of John, is the shortest.

Each verse in Psalm cxxxv ends alike.

No names or words with more than six syllables are found in the Bible.

The thirty-seventh chapter of Isaiah and nineteenth chapter of 2 Kings are alike.

The word girl occurs but once in the Bible, and that in Joel iii. 3.

There are found in both books of the Bible 3,538,463 letters, 773,693 words, 31,373 verses, 1,189 chapters and 66 books.

The twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is the finest chapter to read.

The most beautiful chapter is the twenty-third Psalm.

The four most inspiring promises are in John xiv. 2 vi. 37: Matt. xi. 28, and Psalm xxxvii. 4.

All who flatter themselves with vain boastings should read the sixth chapter of Matthew.

All humanity should learn the sixth chapter of Luke, from the twentieth verse to its ending.

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Yours truly, (REV.) F. M. YOUNG

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