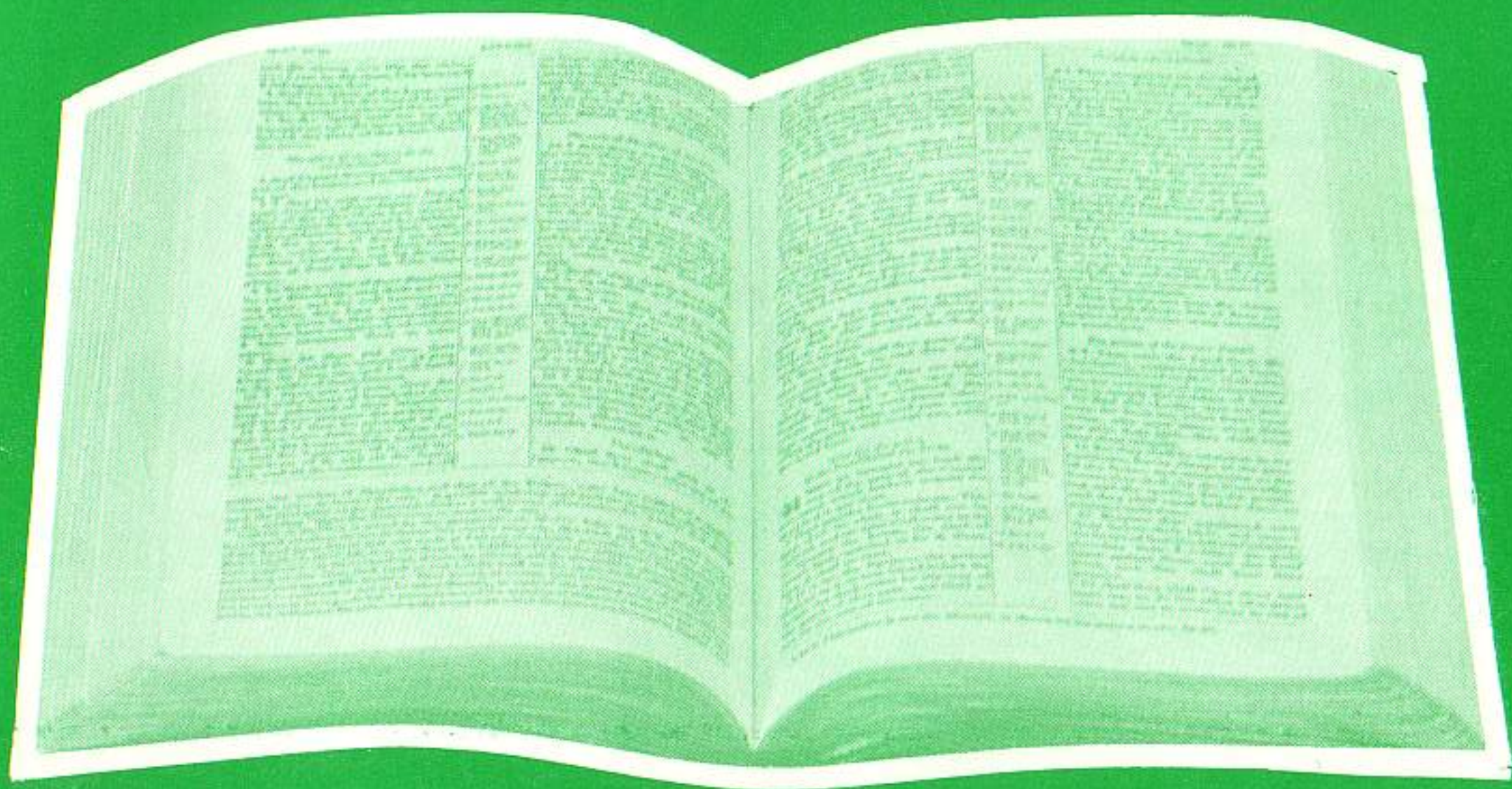


STUDIES IN MATTHEW

PART TWO

(TEACHER)



BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

STUDIES IN MATTHEW

BIBLE LESSONS FOR ADULTS

Written by Jo Scales

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CHAPTER ONE

THE SOWER AND THE SEED

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15.

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON: Matthew 13:1-23.

MEMORY VERSE: "When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart..." (Matthew 13:19a).

TEACHING AIM: My students will understand that many people who hear the gospel will not be saved.

TEACHING AIDS: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 13 marks a turning point in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Up to now he has been teaching in the synagogues. From chapter thirteen on we read more often that he is teaching at the seashore or in homes or in other places. The synagogue is still open to him. He can still teach the common people there; and he does. But the leaders of the Jewish religious community have begun to turn away from him. They have begun to try to find ways to trap him. They recognized that Jesus is a threat to their way of life.

Remember that the Pharisees were the religious experts of the day. They believed that the law was everything. If they followed the law, it did not matter how they felt in their hearts about God.

The Sadducees were another religious group who believed that reward came here on earth. They did not believe in a future life. There was no heaven or hell in their way of thinking. The scribes interpreted the many, many laws of the Jewish people. Most of these laws were man-made laws. All three of these groups feared Jesus. He would change all their beliefs if he was allowed to continue.

In chapter thirteen, too, Jesus began to use parables. Before this time, he had briefly used illustrations in his teaching. he had talked about salt and light and lilies. Now he uses short stories or parables to teach the points he was making. Parables are a quick way to make a vivid and telling point.

Jesus presented four pictures and four explanations in verses one through 23 of chapter thirteen.

The first picture is of a sower or farmer who lost some of his seed on the hard pathway. The birds came and ate these seeds. Read verse 4. The explanation in verse 19 is that some people hear the word and do not understand it. Then Satan comes and takes the word away so that it cannot do its work in the human heart.

The second picture is in verses five and six. It tells that some of the seed fell in a place where a thin layer of soil covered rock stratum. The seeds would warm up quickly in the thin soil, and they would germinate. Then

when the roots began to grow they had no depth of soil to grow into. When the roots arrived at the rock stratum they stopped growing. Then the plants withered up and died. The explanation in verse 20 and 21 is that the word of God or the gospel is heard and accepted by some people. These people have no opportunity or no desire to be discipled. They do not get any training. They do not study the Bible, nor do they pray. Very quickly they meet persecution or trials. When these trials come they cannot stand against them because they have no roots in Christianity, so they fall away.

Verse 7 tells about the third picture. Here the seeds fell on ground that contained thorns. This may not have been obvious to the sower. The thorns could have been seeds, too. But when the good seed grew into plants, the thorns choked them out. Verses 22 offers this explanation. Many people who receive the word of God are filled with worldly desires. They care more for making money and spending it than they care for the gospel. When the seed of the word is implanted in them, it soon is choked out by the worldly ambitions.

The fourth picture is in verses 8 and 9. Here is the sower who has planted his seed in fertile soil. His reward is that the seed will bring forth an abundance of grain. The explanation in verse 23 is that some who hear the word understand it and produce wonderful fruit. This fruit may be the fruit of the Holy Spirit, or it may refer to the unsaved people he brings to the Lord.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Begin this lesson with a discussion of planting methods. Ask the students to tell what methods they use in planting. Let them discuss which is the best method.

Say: "In Israel they used a method of planting called broadcasting. Who can explain what this method is?" If no one knows have someone read the explanation of broadcasting in the students' book. (One may have already talked about this method in the opening discussion. If so, do not explain it again.)

Say: "Today we will find out about how some seeds were planted. We will learn how fruitful the seeds were. We will learn, too, about the seed of the word of God or the gospel. We will find out that some people who hear the word and receive it later will reject it."

Interpretation

Ask the class members to open their Bibles to Matthew 13:1-23. Tell them they may use their Bibles or their pupils' books to answer these questions:

- 1) Where was Jesus?
- 2) Why was he there?
- 3) Why did the crowds come to him?
- 4) What did Jesus do so all the people could hear him?
- 5) Jesus spoke to them in parables. What is a parable?

6) There were four pictures that Jesus presented. The farmer was planting his seeds. Where did the first seeds land?

7) Look in verse 19. What explanation did Jesus give?

8) Look in verse 5 and 6. Where did the seeds fall?

9) In verses 20 and 21 find out and tell us what the rocky soil meant.

10) Look in verse 7 and tell us where some other seed fell. What did Jesus mean? If you do not know look at verse 22.

11) Read verses 8 and 9. Where did these seeds fall? What is the explanation in verse 23?

As the students discuss these questions, add what you want to from your own study.

Say: "Jesus began to use parables in this chapter. He used them often after that. Parables are short stories that make a point clear to the listeners. Jesus also began to teach out by the sea more often. This was because the leaders in the synagogues had begun to wonder about him and what his message would do to them."

Add anything more from your own study that you wish to make this last point clear.

APPLICATION

Ask: "What does this lesson mean to you?" Let the adults discuss this for a few minutes.

Ask: "Have you known people who accepted Christ as their Saviour for a short time? They came to all the church services. They were eager to tell others about Jesus. But the fire only lasted a short time. After only a few weeks, they no longer attended church. They no longer told anyone about Jesus. They no longer had an interest in church matters. Do you think these people were really saved in the first place? Do you think their roots were just too short and they withered away?" Discuss this for a few minutes.

Then, say: "We have a responsibility for new Christians. They are babies in Christ. They need to be trained and taught. Are we doing enough in our churches so that new Christians can grow long roots in Christ? What more can we do?" Discuss this with the group. Make a list of things they can do to help in the ministry to new Christians. Make another list of things the church could do to help new Christians. Ask two or three class members to discuss this list with the pastor.

Close with prayer.

CHAPTER TWO

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 13:24-58; Mark 4:30-32;
Luke 13:18-21

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 13:24-51

MEMORY VERSE: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33).

TEACHING AIM: My students have heard "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven." I want to make sure they understand what the kingdom is.

TEACHING AIDS: On the chalkboard or on large paper, write:
kingdom of heaven

kingdom of God

his kingdom

my kingdom

kingdom of the Lord

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Matthew 13, the kingdom of heaven is mentioned several times. Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to other situations so that his listeners might have a clearer understanding of it.

The "kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven" are terms that are used the same way in the Bible. That is to say, there really is no difference

between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven.

In the Old Testament the "kingdom of God" does not actually appear, but the idea is there. We can read about the "kingdom of the Lord" in 1 Chronicles 28:5. Also, we read about "thy kingdom" in Psalms 145:11, 145:12, and 145:13. "His kingdom" is in Psalms 103:19. The Lord of hosts speaks of "my kingdom" in 1 Chronicles 17:14. These terms are found elsewhere in the Old Testament, as well.

The Bible used the idea of "kingdom of God" to mean three ideas. These are:

- 1) the kingly rule of God
- 2) an eternal fact which is seen on earth by the acceptance of men and women
- 3) the condition which will exist in the future. This means that in various places in the Bible we read that the "kingdom of God is at hand" or "when the kingdom of heaven appears." It is also seen in the saying of Jesus that he would not eat with the disciples again until he ate with them in the kingdom.

The kingly rule of God is here now. It has always been here. And it begins for each individual as he accepts Jesus in his heart. We, as Christians, will be a part of the future kingdom of God.

Matthew 13:23-30 and 36-43 tell about the end time, or the time at the end of time. This is the future time of

judgement. The farmer planted seeds, but an enemy came and sowed weeds in the field. When the servants asked the owner if they should remove the weeds they were told to leave them, so the good seed and the bad grew together.

The disciples wanted a pure church, a church of sinless people. Jesus said that it would have to be left to the judgement to take the sinners out of the midst of the saints. The result of this is that the church is for all sinners; we all stay together. Paul tried to follow this direction of Jesus. He, however, found it necessary to cast out some sinners whose behaviour was completely intolerable.

Matthew 13:31-33: Here are twin parables of the mustard seed and the leaven. They compare the greatness of the kingdom of God with the small beginning at the birth of Jesus.

Matthew 13:44-46: There are twin parables about a hidden treasure and a costly pearl. They teach the same lesson, that a person feels great joy when he has allowed the kingdom of heaven to begin in his heart.

Matthew 13:47-50: This parable of the dragnet and the sorting of the fish may be similar to the parable of the weeds and the wheat. Both have to do with the judgement when the good (Christians) will be sorted from the bad (the lost).

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

After you greet your adult class members, ask them what their salvation

means to them. Get a discussion going. Share with the group what your salvation means to you.

Have each adult put into one sentence what their salvation means to them. This will complete the discussion. One might say: "My salvation is the most important thing in the world." Another might say: "I treasure my salvation more than my life". Let each speak so that all the others may hear what their salvation means. If you have an unsaved person there, do not embarrass him by asking him to say something which is a lie. Instead, when you get to him, just say: "Our friend here will listen today and hear what our salvation means to us."

INTERPRETATION

Say: "For Christians our salvation is a very great treasure. It is the most valuable thing we possess. It was valuable to God, too. He paid a great price for us to have salvation. He paid the price of sending his Son, Jesus, to die on the cross. He exchanged his Son for our salvation."

Continue: "Accepting Jesus as our Saviour is the same thing as allowing the kingdom of God to begin in our hearts. Take a look at these words on the chalk board (or a large paper)." Have one adult read this list. Say: "Through the Bible we read about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. I want us each to understand that these two terms mean the same thing. In the Bible these mean that the kingdom of God is a fact, that God is king and that there will be a kingdom after the end of time."

Continue: "The kingdom of God is a fact shown by men and women, boys and girls accepting Jesus as their Saviour. The kingdom of God begins for them at that moment."

Continue: "The kingdom of God is the kingly reign of God. God is king of the whole world. We can read of this in all the Bible. God created the world. He is the owner of the world, and he is its king."

Continue: "In several places in the Bible we read that the kingdom of God is coming. That is, the complete kingdom is not yet here. It will be complete when the last person who will accept Jesus as their Saviour. This will be the time when Jesus returns to the earth. Revelation tells much about this kingdom and Jesus' reign."

Continue: "In our lesson for today there are six parables. I want you to read these parables and tell us what they mean." If you have at least six people there, give each a parable to read from the Bible and explain, using their pupils' books to help them. If you have more than six, assign a parable to two or more people. They can have ten minutes to read the parable and the explanation in their books. Then they will read the

Scripture and explain the parable. If they do not have books, they will have to use your copy of the pupils' book.

Give the following scriptures:

Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43

Matthew 13:31-32

Matthew 13:33

Matthew 13:44

Matthew 13:45-46

Matthew 13:47-50

As the reports are given, add what you have learnt from your own study.

APPLICATION

Say: "Our salvation is like the pearl of great price. It may cost us everything that we have, but it is worth it. Luke 14:26-27 says: 'If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sister, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.' This means that our salvation must be the most valuable thing in our lives. Jesus must come first in our lives. Does he? Let us pray."

CHAPTER THREE

JESUS BUILDS HIS CHURCH

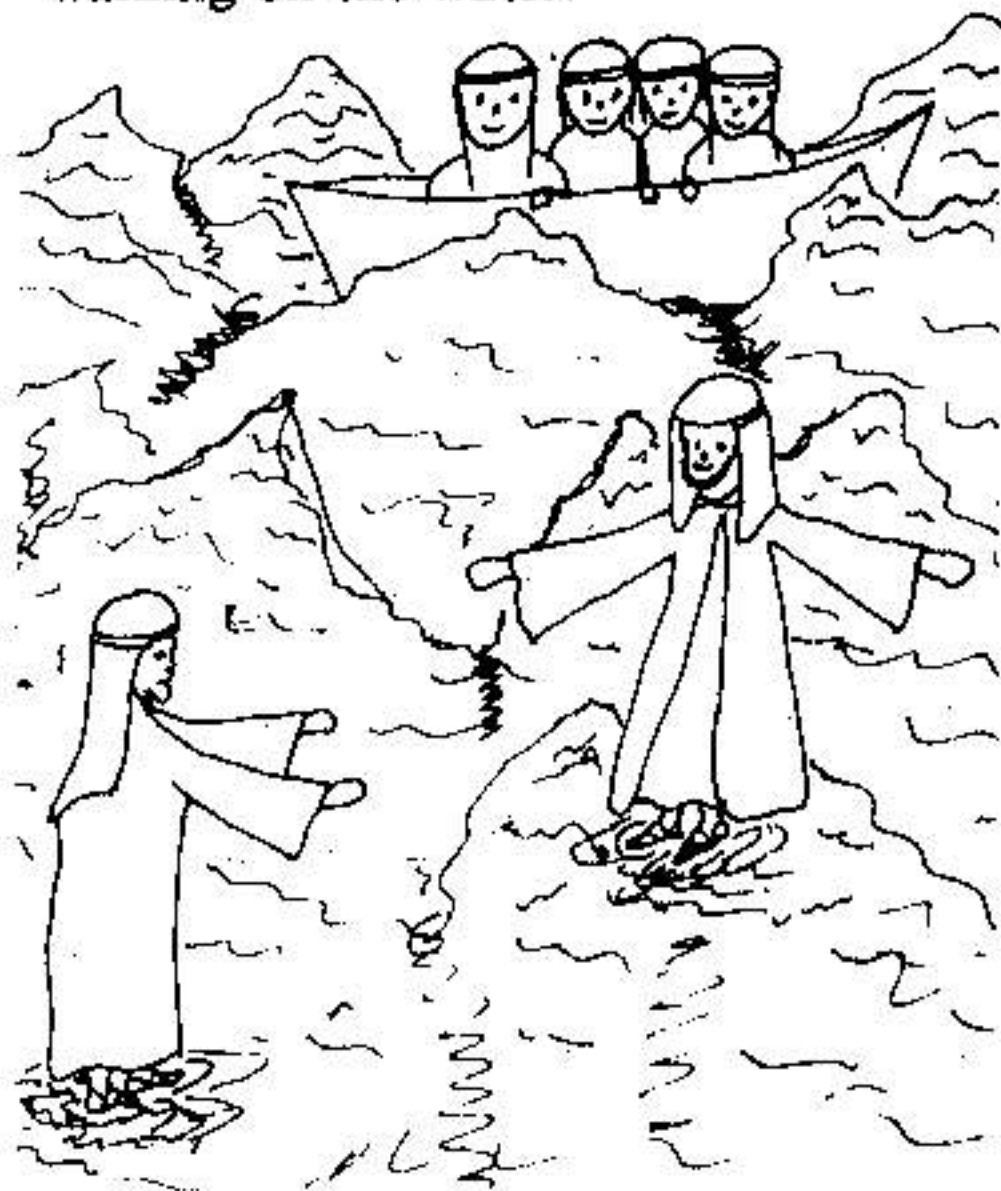
AIM: BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 14:1-17:27

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 14:22-33; Matthew 16:13-24

MEMORY VERSE: "Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'" (Matthew 16:24).

TEACHING AIM: I will teach my students about several events in the historical life of Jesus.

TEACHING AIDS: Provide a picture of Jesus walking on the water. If you want to do so, have Peter walking on the water toward Jesus. Draw the picture if you want to. It may be a simple stick-figure picture. Let the students get a feel of these men actually walking on the water.



PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Some of the events in Jesus' life are historical events. That is, you can read about them in other books besides the Bible. Jesus was written about in many other secular books. The Bible contains many events of Jesus' life which were not contained in secular books. Some of these were recorded by eye witnesses such as Matthew or Mark. The Bible gives a fuller, clearer view of Jesus, but even the Bible contains only a small portion of the events that occurred and the words that Jesus said. Today's lesson tells of some of these events.

Matthew 14:13-21; Jesus had just heard about the death of John the Baptist. He wanted to be alone for a while. He knew that he needed to be with God to face this death, but he also knew that God would have to begin to prepare him to face his own death which was fast approaching.

The country of Galilee is very tiny, only 80 kilometres from north to south and 40 kilometres across. In that small area were 204 towns of at least 15,000 people each. It was a very populous country. Jesus found it hard to be alone. He got in a boat and travelled across the lake to an isolated place.

When the people saw his boat set sail, they began to walk over to where the boat was headed. So when Jesus arrived the people were already there, thousands of them. They needed help.

So rather than being resentful Jesus set about healing them. As the day progressed the people grew hungry. As late evening approached it became necessary to feed the people. The disciples wanted Jesus to send them away, but he refused. Two small fish and five loaves of bread were found among the crowd. That was enough. And the miracle was done. Following this the people wanted to make Jesus king. This was just what they were looking for, a man who could feed them.

Matthew 14:22-33; John 6:15 tells us that the people wanted to actually force Jesus to become their king. So, rather than to have a political event occur which would involve the disciples, he sent them away. They, too had been thinking that Jesus would make a good earthly king.

After the people went away Jesus went alone to the mountain to pray. About three o'clock in the morning, Jesus left his prayers and went to find his disciples. Rounding the headland he was able to see the little boat in the darkness. A full moon helped him see that the boat was in trouble. The waves were large and dangerous. Jesus began to walk toward the little boat, using the water as his highway.

When Peter saw Jesus coming to him on the water, he decided to go to him on the rough waves. This was typical of Peter. He was successful for a while, but then he began to sink. Jesus reached out his hand to Peter, lifted him up again, and together they came to the boat.

Matthew 16:13-24; Caesarea Philippi is forty kilometres north and west of the Sea of Galilee. It was outside the domain of the ruler of Galilee who was Herod Antipas. The ruler there was Philip the Tetrach. The people were non-Jewish in the area and Jesus would have peace to rest, pray and teach his disciples.

The area was scattered with the worship places of other gods. This prompted Jesus to ask his disciples who he was. After some fumbling about, Peter professed that he was the Christ, the Son of God.

Several explanations can be given for verses 17-19. The Catholic Church says that Peter was the first pope. He was given that authority in these verses. Others say that Jesus was referring to the rock of Peter's faith. Still others think that Jesus was referring to himself as the rock, and that Peter would build upon Jesus Christ. Probably what Jesus meant was that Peter was the first to acknowledge that Jesus was the Son of God, and is therefore the first stone in God's church.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Begin this lesson by saying that many of the miracles of Jesus have been explained away by some people. Say: "Our lesson today contains two events which have been explained by people in such a way that they lose their power as miracles. In the first story people have said that Jesus did

not actually turn the small amount of loaves and fishes into an amount to feed over five thousand people. They said, instead, that he took the small meal and used it to convince the other people to take out their hidden meals. In that way there was food for everyone.

"The other miracle they have tried to explain away was when Jesus was walking on the water to the boat. Peter saw him and left the boat, walking toward Jesus on the rolling water. When he began to sink Jesus reached out his hand and pulled him up. They say that Jesus was simply walking though the surf or the shallows at the edge of the lake. When Peter began to sink he slipped only.

"I do not believe these explanations. Let us look at the Bible and see what the truth is."

INTERPRETATION

Ask a pupil to read Matthew 14:13-21. Tell the students that this is the miracle of the feeding of five thousand. Ask if they see anywhere in this story that Jesus simply asked the people to remove the hidden food they each carried and eat it. Say: "This story is real just as we have read it. From five loaves and two fish, a huge number were fed and twelve baskets of food were left-over."

Ask another to read Matthew 14:22-33. Say: "This is the Scripture of the time Jesus came walking on the water to meet his disciples who were in a boat. Peter wanted to go meet him. He climbed out of the boat and began

his walk. But soon he grew afraid and looked down at the surging water. he immediately began to get wet. Do you see anything in this story that would lead you to believe that the boat was very close to the shore and Jesus was standing in shallow water rather than walking on water?" Show the picture you have brought or drawn.

Say: "Men try to explain away Jesus' miracles just as they try to explain away God's power."

Have a third student read Matthew 16:13-24. Say: "This is a difficult passage. We do not know exactly what Jesus was saying. Some like the Catholics believe that Jesus was saying that Peter was to be the first pope or leader of that church." (Use your own study to name the other possible explanations. Use the last one as the most probable explanation: that Peter was the first to acknowledge that Jesus was the Son of God, and is therefore the first stone in God's church.)

APPLICATION

Say: "When we read historical events in the life of Christ, it may be hard to find a lesson for our own lives, but in each of these we can see at least one lesson.

"In the first event, Jesus fed the multitude. This says to me that we do not have to worry about anything. god will take care of us. It also convinces me that God is all-powerful.

"In the second event, Jesus walked on the water, and Peter failed to. This reminds me that I must keep my eyes on Jesus or I, too, will fail. It reminds

me also that God is Master of winds and waves.

"In the third event, Peter said that Jesus was the Son of the living God.

This touches my conscience. How often do I tell the world who Jesus is?"

After a period of discussion, ask for questions and close with prayer.

CHAPTER FOUR

WE MUST FORGIVE OTHERS

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 18

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 18:15-35

MEMORY VERSE: "Then Peter ...said to him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven' " (Matthew 18:21-22).

TEACHING AIM: Many Christians can not forgive, nor can they accept criticism. I want my class members to know how to do both, and to exercise forgiveness fully.

TEACHING AIDS: Bring an envelope with you that has some money in it. Prepare it so that it looks like a lot of money. You might have a larger bit of money on the top of some other material like paper. Let the class see the money so they will think the envelope is filled with much money. Also, bring along the smallest valued coin or bill in your country. Put them side by side on the table in front of the

students so that they can see both - the envelope filled with money, and the small coin.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The verses in Matthew 18:15-35 teach about forgiveness.

Matthew 18:15-17: Jesus is speaking in these verses. He is teaching about forgiveness. As we study these verses we must remember that our writer did not copy the exact words of Jesus when they were said. Many years passed between the teaching and the writing of the teaching. That is why we have Jesus telling us to go before the church. There was no church during Jesus' day. It is also the reason that the writer has Jesus saying that the one who will not ask forgiveness is like a Gentile or tax collector. This attitude toward Gentiles and tax collectors was a prevalent attitude at the time Matthew was written. Jesus, however, loved the Gentiles and went out of his way to win the tax collectors like Zacchaeus and Matthew himself.

We can be certain, though, that Matthew was depending upon some original saying of Jesus and upon Deuteronomy 19:15 which says, "A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offence that he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained." It is very likely that Jesus himself quoted this Scripture.

We do have a lesson here, and the lesson is from Jesus himself.

Jesus placed the responsibility of forgiveness on the shoulders of the wronged, not on the wrongdoer. A sinner's sin has served to cripple him. He may be unable to see clearly or to understand fully following his sin.

The wronged goes to the sinner alone and tries to make things right. The idea here is not to expose the sin, but to shield the sinner as much as we can. Then, if he will not forgive and ask forgiveness the wronged goes with two or three witnesses. It is important to note that these are not a panel of judges who have come to condemn the sinner. Rather it is a peace committee. Perhaps the wronged has sinned, too. The witnesses are there to try to seed a reconciliation. If this fails the matter is to be brought before the loving community, the church. If they would treat the sinner like Jesus treated the tax collectors, that is with love, caring and concern, most would be returned in love to the church.

Matthew 18:18-20: This is speaking about our relationships on earth. If we make good ones they will endure into heaven.

Matthew 18:21: In this verse Peter asked how many times he must forgive, seven times? He got this from Genesis 4:24. Jesus replied that there is no end to our forgiveness. Forgiveness is an attitude, not an act. We should live with an attitude of accepting people as they are.

Matthew 18:22-35: This is a parable which is not in any of the other gospels. It explains vividly just what Jesus meant about forgiveness. The ten thousand talents was a very large amount of money. The hundred denarii was very, very small.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Have the envelope of "money" and the small coin on the table so the students can see them.

Say: "Our lesson today is about forgiveness. Here in Africa we are quick to forgive the little things (point to the small coin), but in the big things (point to the envelope of money), we do not want to forgive.

"Some of us have a strange idea about forgiving when it comes to money. Sometimes we borrow money from someone with no intention whatever of paying the money back. When the lender comes to us, we ask, 'Will you not forgive me this debt?'

We may even quote this Scripture to the lender. This is, however, a misinterpretation of this Scripture. Let us look at our Bible and see what forgiveness is all about."

INTERPRETATION

From your Bible read Matthew 18:15-17 to the other adults. Ask one of them to explain in his own words what this means. If he has a pupil's book, he may follow the steps outlined there.

Now, say: "Let us repeat the three steps. First we go alone, then we go with two or three witnesses. Finally we take them before the church. Remember here that when we go alone, it is to insure that the sin or wrong will not be publicised. It does not help anyone for us to go out among our mutual friends and tell what our brother has done. We must handle this with sensitivity. The two or three we take with us are not to go so they may agree totally with our side. They are to go to hear both sides and try to make peace. The final treating of them as tax collectors should be just like Jesus treated the tax collectors. You remember how he treated Zachaeus and Matthew?" Allow two or three to tell these stories.

Have someone read Matthew 18:18-20. Say: "These verses tell us to make good relationships and make them sound ones. They will last into eternity."

Read Matthew 18:21-35 or have someone else read it. Say: "Peter asked his question badly. It was like he was asking if he had to forgive at all. This was not his intention. He really did want to know how many times he was required to forgive. Jesus explained to him that we must always be ready to forgive. We are not to be ready always to take offense about everything. Instead we must retain an attitude of loving forgiveness in every situation.

"Then Jesus told the parable of the king and the servant. Who would like to tell us that story again?" Let someone tell the story. Add whatever you consider necessary. Then, ask: "Did Jesus mean that we are to borrow money with no intention of returning it?" Discuss this. Ask: "Did the servant ask the king to forgive him his debt?" (No, he asked for enough time to pay the debt? "Who decided to forgive the debt?" (It was the king himself.) "It is not good for us to ask someone to forgive us when we owe them a debt."

APPLICATION

Say: "We are to live in an attitude of forgiveness. What does that mean to you?" Give the class time to discuss this adequately and close in prayer.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIFE COMMITMENT

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 19:21:5

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 19:27-20:32

MEMORY VERSE: "even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to understand that they will serve God through service to others.

TEACHING AIDS: Bring and place before the group a cooking pot, a hoe, a scythe, some soap, a teacher's book, a hymnbook, a pen, a duster, some chalk or any other item you might have that is a tool. You will show these to the group as ways to serve God by serving your fellow man.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 19:23-30: A rich young man had just left Jesus. He had wanted to follow Jesus, but he was unwilling to part with his riches. Jesus told the disciples that it was very hard for a person with great wealth to enter the kingdom of God. He said that it was harder for a man involved with many things to leave them and to concentrate upon the kingdom of God. He did not say that it was impossible, only difficult. He compared a rich man entering the kingdom of God with a large camel going through the eye of a needle.

Then Peter asked Jesus what the reward would be for leaving everything and following him as he and the other disciples had done. This was not a very Christian question, actually very selfish. But, it gave Jesus a chance to teach an important lesson. Christians who had followed Jesus would reign with him in the kingdom of God. The ones who were concerned with little reward would be rewarded greatly. Those who expected great reward would find they had only a small reward.

Matthew 20:1-16: This is a parable that illustrates just what Jesus had said. The first will be last and the last first. The parable is easy to read and to understand. Our concern is with the justice of the situation. One man worked all day for his wage, and another worked only a short time and received the same wage. At the time for the steward to pay them, those who had worked the whole day complained bitterly because they got the same wage. The householder told them they had no right to complain. He had given them what he promised. He was generous with the late-comers. That was his right to do. God can do what he likes because he alone is the owner of all things.

Matthew 20:17-19: Jesus warned his disciples for the third time that he was going to Jerusalem. He told them that he would suffer and die there. He also said that he would rise from the dead.

Jesus knew that his time on earth was drawing to a close.

Matthew 20:20-28: The mother of James and John came to ask Jesus to make sure that her sons sat in the places of honour in the kingdom. She wanted one to sit on the right and the other to sit on the left. Jesus rebuked the two disciples in verse 22, placing the blame for the question on them rather than on their mother. He asked if they could drink of his cup. He was referring to his death. And they answered they could, but when the time came in the Garden of Gethsemane, they all ran away.

James was indeed the first martyr. We do not know how John died. But they drank of his cup of death.

Jesus said that those who served would be first in the kingdom, and those who had been served would come last.

Matthew 20:29-34. Jesus performed another miracle of healing two blind men.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Show the items that you have brought to the class. Ask what is done with each item. Let the class freely discuss these items. Come to the conclusion with the class that all these items are used in service. They are tools to be used when we serve others.

Tell this story: "A woman was ill. It was harvest time, but she could not farm. She lay on her bed and prayed.

Soon a church member called at her door. When she told him to come in, he explained that he had come to help her. God had led him to do so. What did he have in his hand?" (The class will say a scythe, or a hoe or a basket or something else used in harvesting.)

Tell this story: "A man was blind. He wanted to write to his son in the city. He wanted to find out how the boy was doing in his new job. He could not see to write. A man came up to him as he sat outside in the sun. He said, 'I felt that I would come to see you today to help you.' What did the man have in his hand? (a pen or pencil and paper)

Tell this story: "A child lay ill in bed. He had lain there many days. One day, a young girl from the church came and said that she wanted to play with the child while the mother worked in the forest. What did the young girl have in her hand?" (a toy or a book)

Say: "All these people are serving God by serving their fellow man. It does not matter what the work is. Jesus said that when you minister to others you minister to him."

INTERPRETATION

Ask the class to open their Bibles and read with you Matthew 19:23-30. Say: "This Scripture occurred after a rich young man had been to see Jesus. He wanted to follow Jesus. What did Jesus tell him to do?" (Give time for answering). "What did the rich young man answer?" (Give time for

answering.) "Was the rich young man willing to do what Jesus said?" (Give time for answering.) Say, "It is hard for a rich man to give up all he has. He would be minstering to the poor, the undeserving in his own eyes. Did he receive Christ?" (Give time for answering.)

Have an adult read Matthew 20:1-16. Say: "This parable explains what Peter had asked in the previous Scripture. We do not deserve heaven. We do nothing to earn it. It comes to us whether we work many long years or if we do not work at all. The greatest in the kingdom will have been the servant of others on the earth."

Have an adult read Matthew 20:17-19. Say: "This is the third time in Matthew that Jesus has told his disciples that he is going to Jerusalem, that he would die there and be raised from the dead.

Ask a class member to read Matthew 20:20-28. Ask the class what the mother of James and John wanted. Ask them to discuss this parable as to how Jesus answered. Ask them what motivated John and James to ask such a question. Ask them what Jesus meant by drinking the cup that he would drink. Ask them if the hearers agreed to die with him. Ask them what actually happened in the Garden of Gethsamane when the threat of danger appeared.

Say: "Jesus said that we show our greatness in our service to others."

APPLICATION

Ask: "How much service do you do for others?" Let the class discuss this. Ask them if doing the ordinary jobs for our families and our bosses could be called service to the Lord. Ask them if they have felt the Lord leading them to do something special for someone who was ill or disabled or poor or in jail. Jesus said, "Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:34-40).

Close with prayer.

CHAPTER SIX

THE NEED FOR REPENTANCE

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 21:6-22:14

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 21:23-45; Genesis 1:1, 26;
John 3:16

MEMORY VERSE: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to understand that repenting means more than just being sorry for sins. Rather, it means making a conscious effort to turn our lives around and walk in a new direction.

TEACHING AIDS: On the chalkboard or on a large paper, write:

black	white
up	down
in	out
enter	exit
left	right
Christian	lost person

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Genesis 1:1: It was God, not man who created the heavens and the earth. Because he created it, he owns it. Because he owns it, he has the right to make laws for his earth.

Genesis 1:26: God created man to be like God. This does not mean that man looks like God, but that he has

the right to make decisions. He gave man the rule over all the other creatures he had made. Man has the right to follow God's laws or the right to disobey God.

John 3:16: Even though man disobeys God, God still loves man. He loved him so much that he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ to the earth. Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God will not die the second death. That means he will not be separated from God throughout eternity.

Matthew 21:28-32: In this parable two sons were told to go into the vineyard and work. The first son refused to go, but later he changed his mind and went. The second son said that he would go, but later he did not go.

The comparison is made that the first son who said no and later repented represented the Gentiles. At first they refused Jesus, but later they repented and entered into the kingdom. In the explanation, Jesus calls them the tax-collectors and the harlots.

The second son who at first said yes, but later failed to go, represented the Jewish leaders. Jesus said the tax-collectors and harlots would go into the kingdom before they went in.

Matthew 21:33-46: This is a very clear parable. God is the owner of the vineyard. The vineyard is the nation of

Israel. The servants are the prophets. The son is Jesus. The other tenants are the Christians and the Church.

The meaning of the vineyard is equally clear. God placed the nation of Israel in the hands of the religious leaders. They did not follow instructions. He sent his prophets one by one over many, many years to warn the religious leaders. They would not hear the prophets. Then God sent his Son, Jesus. The religious leaders killed the Son.

In this parable we can see that God trusts men to do things for him. Sometimes he finds that they have disobeyed. We also see that this vineyard was well-equipped. God tells us to do a job, but he provides what we need to do the job well. We can see, too, that Jesus knew that he was going to have to die. He recognized that fact early in his life.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Show the words that you have written on the board or on paper. Ask the adults what is as different from black as it can possibly be. They should answer "white." Continue asking what the opposite is of each word in the left hand column.

When you get to "Christian" and the class responds with "lost person", say; "The thing that is as different as possible from Christian is lost person. I wonder if that is true in our lives. Are we really a complete opposite to a lost person? Do the people who live

with you know that you are a Christian? Do your co-workers know that you are Christian? Or, do you act just like they do?"

Ask; "What makes a Christian different from a lost person?" He is different because he has changed his mind about his life. He has thought over his sin and his acts and has decided that he wants an entirely different life. He wants to follow Christ. This change is called repentance. The Christian has repented of his sins. He has changed his life. This is a change of the heart, but it is mainly a change of mind. The person consciously, day by day follows Jesus Christ as Lord of his life. He no longer wants to be like the world or lost people. He wants a new life completely. Our lesson today is about repentance."

INTERPRETATION

Ask the adults in your class to open their Bibles to Matthew 21. Ask one of them to read verses 28-32. Ask him or another to tell this short parable in his own words.

Ask; "Which of these men was the good man?" Let the class discuss this. Help them to see that neither of the men was really good. Both were imperfect. Even so, one of the two sons was better than the other. He was the one who repented of his act, and went to the vineyard to work.

Go on in the discussion to help your class members to see that the ideal son would have agreed to the father's

request immediately and would have gone to the vineyard without question or hesitation.

Say: "These two sons are very much like many of the people that we know. One was very courteous to his father. On the outside he was an obedient son. But inside he had no intention of working. We see these people all around us. They proclaim loudly how religious they are. You meet them on the street and they take up several minutes telling you how close to the Lord they are. They are in church every Sunday. They make a great show of being a Christian.

"The other kind of person that we all know is the loud, abrasive person who is a very tough guy. You will never see him in church. He says that he has nothing to do with God or the church. He makes a great show of being very bad. But somehow you hear that he has paid the school fees for a child, he has donated flour to some hungry people, he has been to

the hospital many times to see sick people. He wants the world to believe he is bad, but inside he is a kind man.

"We see these people around us. Neither of them is what God wants. God wants us to be obedient to him and to live for him every day. He wants us to really turn away from our sinful lives and live for him."

APPLICATION

Ask: "What does this lesson say to us?" Let the class members discuss this a few minutes.

Say: "If we have really repented from our sins, it will be evident in our lives. We will not be able to hide the fact. The difference is visible. Have you really repented of your sins?"

Ask someone to tell you what repentance means. Ask if the others agree with what he said.

Conclude the class meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JESUS SPEAKS ABOUT HYPOCRISY

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 22:15-23:36

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 22:15-40; 23:13-36

MEMORY VERSE: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others" (Matthew 23:23).

TEACHING AIDS: My students need to know what a hypocrite is.

TEACHING AIDS: none

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 22:15-22: Jesus has been able to make three successful attacks upon the religious leaders. In Matthew 21:28-32, Jesus presents them as the son who refused to do his father's will. In Matthew 21:33-46, they are presented as the wicked tenants who would pay no rent. In Matthew 22:1-14, they are the guests invited to the banquet but who refused to attend. Now in these verses, the religious leaders begin their own attack against Jesus.

In these verses, two unlikely groups became team members against Jesus. The Herodians were supporters of the descendants of Herod the Great. They were a Roman political party. The

Pharisees would keep the Jewish law, but they did not want to obey the Roman government. Usually the Pharisees and the Herodians were enemies.

The Pharisees and the Herodians tried to trap Jesus. They wanted to see what he would say if he was asked about his loyalty to Rome. If he spoke against the Roman government, the Herodians could accuse him before the magistrates. If he spoke for the government he would offend the loyal Jews who felt they owed no allegiance to any but God.

The tax here was the poll tax levied on every Jewish male above age 14 and every female above age 12. It was one of three taxes which the Roman government levied and which were bitterly resented by the Jews.

When Jesus was shown the coin he had requested, he knew it to be the coinage of the present emperor. Each Caesar had his own coins minted immediately upon his taking office. Jesus simply asked, "Whose image is on this coin?" He was asking, "Whose coin is this?" The Herodians answered that it was Caesar's. Jesus escaped the trap by telling them to give to the Caesar what was his, and to God what was his.

Matthew 15:23-33: That very day Jesus was confronted by the Sadducees, a religious group which believed there was no future life. They

thought they had laid their trap well by asking whose wife a woman should be who had seven brothers as husband.

Jesus confounded them by asking them what the commonest name for God was in the Pentateuch, the Jewish law book. It was "I am the God of Abraham and the God of Issac and God of Jacob". Then he asked if God could be a God to dead men. This proved that there is a future life to the Sadducees.

Matthew 22:34-40: Jesus' answer to the lawyer or scribe was that the greatest commandment was to love the Lord first, and man second. It is only when we completely love God that we are able to love man.

Matthew 23:13-36: In these verses Jesus pronounces seven woes upon the scribes and the Pharisees. These woes were not curses. They were lamentations, as a person would weep and lament over the death of a beloved friend or family member. Jesus was sorry for the Pharisees and the scribes. He was also greatly sorrowful for the acts they were committing which were preventing people from coming into the kingdom.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask the class if they have ever seen anyone trap an animal. Ask them how trapping is done. Several different people should be able to share several different kinds of trapping. There are many ways to trap birds and animals.

Let the class discuss these for a few minutes.

Then ask; "Who has ever seen one person try to trap another?" This may be harder to answer. Some may be aware that they have seen such a thing. Some may be willing to share experiences they have had of people trapping them. They may recall when a teacher tried to trap them when they were in school, or they may remember when their own children tried to trap them, or perhaps an older person in the village.

Say; "It is not pleasant to be trapped. Our lesson today is about some times when Jesus escaped some traps that were laid for him. It also includes some woes that he pronounced upon the trappers."

INTERPRETATION

Have the class open their Bibles to Matthew 22. Ask someone to read verses 15-22. Or, you may ask them to take turns reading the verses.

Do the same thing now with verses 23-33. Then, do the same thing with Matthew 23:13-36.

After all the Scriptures have been read, divide the class into three groups. Have each group take one of the Scriptures. Each small group will meet together and discuss their Scripture. Give them twenty or thirty minutes to do this. Encourage them to use their pupils' books. Tell them to elect a chairman and a reporter. The reporter will take notes and later will report the group's findings to the

whole group. The chairman will make sure each group member has a chance to participate in the discussion.

During the time the small groups are meeting, you the teacher should go from group to group, adding information from your own study. Also watch to be sure each person is being encouraged to share his views.

After the small groups meet, call them back to the whole group. Give each reporter one third of the remaining time to give his report.

APPLICATION

Say: "Christ had many enemies. He had them because he spoke up for God and for God's kingdom. He refused to remain silent. I wonder if we have any enemies for Christ's sake. If not, could it be because we do not speak up for the Lord? Do we fail to say what God would want us to say? Let us think about that this week."

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WATCHING FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 24:1-51; Mark 13; Luke 17:26-27, 34-35; Mark 12:39-40, 42-46; Daniel 9:27

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 24:1-51

MEMORY VERSE: "Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42).

TEACHING AIM: This lesson will help me teach my students what it will be like when Jesus returns.

TEACHING AIDS: Write on the chalk board the following:

1. the destruction of Jerusalem

2. the day of the Lord
3. Jesus' return to earth

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 24:1-2; These verses refer to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, an event which occurred in 70 A.D., forty years after Jesus began his ministry. They also refer to the end time when Christ will return to the earth.

This temple was a wonderfully made building. It was of white marble and had gold and precious stones. It was draped with rich tapestries. The disciples were amazed at the building.

It was such a bright building that it hurt the eyes to look at it.

The temple had arches with a span of 41½ feet and the angle stones were 20 to 40 feet in length and weighed 100 tons. Jesus forecast that these stones would be moved during the destruction so that no stone rested upon the other.

Matthew 24:3-14: In these verses Jesus talks about all three future times: the destruction of Jerusalem, his second coming and the end of the age. It seems that he is using the destruction of Jerusalem as a foreshadowing of the events that will happen when he comes again at the end of the age.

Jesus said in these verses that the people must not stop all activity, and they must not be misled by false teachers. They must not be constantly worried about the end of time.

Matthew 24:15-28: These verses speak both of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age. The first several verses are definitely about the destruction of Jerusalem. The last two may refer to either the destruction or to the end of the age. When Jesus returns it will be like a bolt of lightning that everyone is aware of. His coming will happen. There is no doubt about it. He will return to claim his people even as the vultures gather around a carcass. Both are inevitable events.

Matthew 24:29-31: These verses foretell the coming again of Jesus and the end of the age. Great signs will

herald his coming. Then the Son of Man will come upon clouds of glory. He is coming to judge the people.

Matthew 24:32-35: Jesus said that the people know that warm weather is approaching when the sap rises in the fig tree causing the buds and then the leaves to appear. In the same way, when we see the signs he has just spoken of we will know that the end is coming.

There is a problem here in the interpretation of verse 34. It seemed that Jesus was saying that the people living at that time would still be living when he returns in glory. That generation has, of course, long since died. We can only say that Jesus himself did not know exactly when the end time would be. This is proven in the next verses.

Matthew 24:35-44: Again these verses refer to the coming of Christ and the end time. Jesus said he did not know when that would be. Only God the Father knows. The rest of the passage shows the suddenness and the divisiveness of his coming. No one would have time to get prepared. We must stay in a state of readiness.

Two people side by side will be parted when the end comes. Two who are working together will be divided. The line will run through homes, through families, through marriages. The saved will go to be with God. The lost will remain.

Matthew 24:45-51: The main idea in this parable is of preparedness. We

must be watchful and ready when the Lord returns.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask; "How do you get ready for a guest in your home?" Allow time for discussion. You may want to write down a list of the things that your class members do to get ready for guests.

After they have discussed this matter for a time, ask, "Do you make different preparations for different guests?" Let them discuss this for a time.

Say; "If Jesus was returning to earth today and you knew it, what would you do to prepare yourself for his coming?" Again let the class discuss this.

Say; "I think we would all like to make a few changes in our lives if we knew the Lord was coming today. We should remember that we are supposed to live in a constant state of readiness for the Lord's return. Our lesson today will tell us some of the things we can watch for."

INTERPRETATION

Say; "On the chalk board (or paper) I have written about three future events from the time Jesus lived. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, about thirty-seven years after Jesus died. That was a future event while he lived. The other two 'the day of the Lord' and 'Jesus' return to

earth' are future events even for us at this time." Erase the board.

You will use a teaching method called Scripture search to teach this lesson. You will read certain passages of Scripture. Then, ask your students to tell whether the verses are about the destruction of Jerusalem, about the day of the Lord or about the second coming of Jesus.

Say; "Today we will do a Scripture search. I will read certain verses. I want you to tell me whether they are about the destruction of Jerusalem, about the day of the Lord or about the second coming of Jesus. If we decide that it is about the second coming of Jesus, I want us to write the signs of his coming on the chalk board (or on paper if you do not have a chalk board)."

Ask someone to come to the board to write. Read the following Scriptures and discuss them as outlined:

1. Matthew 24:1-2
2. Matthew 24:3-14
3. Matthew 24:15-28
4. Matthew 24:29-31
5. Matthew 24:32-35
6. Matthew 24:35-44
7. Matthew 24:45-51

Allow plenty of time for this discussion. Add from your own study so that each student will understand fully the signs of his coming.

When you finish, read all the signs out loud. Your students may wish to make a copy of these signs to put into their Bibles.

APPLICATION

Say: "When Jesus told his followers about his coming again, he did not know that he would tarry these thousands of years. Even now, we do not know how much longer his return will be delayed. Only God has this information. Jesus will come when God is ready, in the fulness of time.

Our job is to stay ready for his return at any time.

"This does not mean that we are to stop our work and fast and pray all the time. This would be like the unfaithful servant. We are to work with an 'eye on the eastern sky.' This means that we are to do our work, while watching.

"Are you ready for the Lord's return?"

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER NINE

THREE PARABLES ABOUT JUDGEMENT DAY

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 25:1-46; Acts 17:31; Hebrews 9:27

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 25:1-46

MEMORY VERSE: "...Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).

TEACHING AIM: These three parables will help my students to decide if they are ready for the judgement.

TEACHING AIDS: Write on the chalk board or on large paper this question: Are you ready for the judgement?

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 25:1-13: Weddings in Palestine are conducted today very much like they were conducted in Jesus' time. It is a time of great festivity. Everyone comes to the wedding or to the week of festivals following the wedding. Even the lawyers and scribes were allowed to leave off studying the law during a wedding. If a wedding occurred during a special religious occurrence the people were excused from the more strenuous parts of the observance. Weddings were very important.

The parable tells about ten maidens whose job it was to provide light for the wedding party. We are not told whether the bridegroom was coming to get the bride from her father's house, or whether this event took place after the wedding when the bride and bridegroom came home to begin the week of festivity. In either event the girls were waiting outside with their lamps. All had oil, but five had extra oil in flasks. They had come prepared to wait a long while if necessary. The other girls were not prepared.

Finally the wedding party came. When the girls heard the cry they all woke up and trimmed off the burned part of the wick. They were ready, but then one by one the lamps of five of the girls sputtered out. They did not have enough oil. Frantically they tried to borrow oil from the other girls. Failing that, they ran to buy oil. When they returned the wedding party had entered into the house, and the door was shut. They could not participate in the party going on inside.

Some writers feel that the five unprepared girls represent the house of Israel, and the prepared girls are the Christians. Others say that the unprepared girls were simply those who have not accepted Jesus as Saviour, while the prepared ones have done so.

Matthew 25:14-30: This is the parable of the talents. From it we get the modern word which means to us our abilities. Some have a gift of singing. Others may be gifted teachers.

Still others may have a talent for brick-laying. In this study, however, the talent was a sum of money, roughly \$1000 American money.

The rich man of the story is God. He went on a journey and left some of his riches in the hands of three of his servants. One was given five, one two and the last one was given only one. Then the master went away.

When he returned he found that the five talent man had earned another five talents. The two talent man had done just as well. He had earned two more talents. The one talent man, however, had hidden his talent in the earth. This was a common practice of the day.

The master was pleased with the first two men but angry with the third man. The one talent man tried to lay the blame on the rich man (God). He said that he knew him to be harsh, getting reward in places where he had not worked. Fearful of losing the talent, he had placed it in a safe place.

Then the rich man (God) did a seemingly harsh thing. He took away the talent from the man and threw him into outer darkness. He gave the talent to the man with five talents.

The lesson is that we must use the talents we have, whether they be great or little. If we fail, we can lose all of them.

Matthew 25:31-46: This parable teaches that we are to be serving others, especially the needy. We must

help in doing the simple things like giving a meal, visiting a sick person, welcoming a stranger. This needs to be totally free from calculation. That is to say that we do it without hope of reward of any kind.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Point to the question you have written. Then say: "Are you ready? We have three parables today that tell of the time when Jesus will come in judgement upon the earth. The first explains what happened at a wedding feast when five young women failed to come prepared with enough oil. They were not ready for the time of Jesus' return.

"The second parable tells about three servants. Two of them were found faithful. One was found to be fearful and unprofitable. He was cast into outer darkness.

"The third tells about service. We can be ready when Jesus comes again if we are busy in his service. Let us look at these stories."

INTERPRETATION

Ask a student to read Matthew 25:1-13. Ask another to tell the story in his own words. Let others help him tell the story if you like.

When he finishes, ask these questions. Let the students discuss the answers.

1. How many maidens were there?
2. How many were faithful and ready for the bridegroom's arrival?

3. What did they do to get ready?
4. How did the other girls fail?
5. What do you think the oil represented? (Some say it represents faith.)

Have another adult read Matthew 25:14-30. When he finishes ask another to tell the story in his own words. Allow others to help if they wish. Ask these questions following the story telling.

1. Why did the rich man give the talents to the servants?
2. How many did he give to each man?
3. Are we like the five talent man, the two talent or the one talent man?
4. What is the lesson taught here?

Have another adult read Matthew 25:31-46. Ask someone to retell this story. Ask these questions when he finishes.

1. What is the meaning of this parable about sheep and goats?
2. Who are the sheep and who are the goats?
3. Where were the sheep allowed to go?
4. What did Jesus mean when he said that he had been fed, cheered and visited when he was in need?

APPLICATION

Ask: "How can we be ready for the judgement? First of all we must accept Jesus as our Saviour, then we must begin our journey to heaven. Salvation

is a three stage event. We are saved when we accept Jesus as our Saviour. We are continually saved as we serve others, and in serving others we serve him. And we are saved during the end time when we enter into heaven."

Continue: "So to be ready for the judgement we need to be serving Christians, that is Christians who are daily about the business of doing this will. How ready are you for Jesus to come?"

CHAPTER TEN

THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' LAST WEEK

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 26:1-30; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8; Zechariah 11:12

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 26:1-30

MEMORY VERSE: "...he said to his disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of man will be delivered up to be crucified' " (Matthew 26:1b-2).

TEACHING AIM: It will help my students to understand the sacrifice that Jesus made for us if they know how he felt about his own death.

TEACHING AIDS: Try to find pictures of the time Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, of Judas with the Pharisees, the agony in the Garden of Gethsamane or the last supper. If you can only find one of these use it. If you have more use them all. If you have none, show the picture in this book.



JESUS BEGINS THE LORD'S SUPPER

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 26:1-2: Jesus completed his fifth great sermon in verse 1. In verse 2, he again tells his disciples that he will be betrayed and then crucified. Up to this point, Jesus had called the

religious leaders hypocrites. Now, though, he accepts the inevitable.

The Passover was eaten in the Jewish month of Nisan which is March to April in our calendar. It was eaten on the fifteenth of Nisan, so any time after sundown on the fourteenth the meal could be eaten. That would make the events in this lesson occur on the thirteenth of Nisan.

Matthew 26:3-5: The religious leaders had decided they must band together to get rid of Jesus. They gathered in the courtyard of Caiphas who was the high priest.

It appears that the Pharisees have taken a lesser role in the persecution of Jesus, and the Sadducees have taken the leading role.

Caiphas was high priest from 18 A.D. to 36. This was a position which was approved by the Roman government. A man could only have the position if he was willing to cooperate with the Roman government. Caiphas was evidently very willing to do so since he held the position so long. There were twenty-eight high priests in a hundred years. Caiphas held the position 18 years, and that shows that he was cooperating with the Romans.

The religious leaders were unable to decide what to do about Jesus, when Judas provided them the way to handle the situation.

Matthew 26:6-13: In this story an unnamed woman poured an expensive perfume upon the head of Jesus. Some say that she was anointing him to be

king of Israel. She was trying to force him to proclaim his kingship. Instead Jesus said that it was a beautiful act which helped to prepare him for his death. Among all the dreadful things that were happening to Jesus and that would happen to him, the deed of this woman stands out for its beauty and love.

Matthew 26:14-16: While the woman was pouring out oil that if sold would have fed 5000 people, Judas went furtively to the Jewish authorities and betrayed Jesus. He told them he would keep them informed of Jesus' plans so they could seize him.

He was given thirty shekels which was worth less than five British pounds.

Matthew 26:17-25: Jesus had made some arrangements for him and his disciples to eat the Passover meal together. During the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, the lambs were killed in the temple and brought to the homes. Complete meals were the lamb which was roasted, bitter herbs, unleavened bread and wine.

During the meal, Jesus announced that one of those present would betray him. It is interesting that no one suspected Judas, but each suspected himself. Then, Jesus said that it was one of those who dipped in the bowl with him. Then, when Judas asked, "Is it I?" Jesus said, "You said it."

Matthew 26:25-30: This is the beautiful portrayal of the last supper. Jesus told them to gather and drink wine and eat bread as a remembrance

of him. And he said they would eat no more with him until they did so in the kingdom.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Our lesson today is about one of the saddest times in all of history, the last week in the life of Jesus. He knew that he would die, and he felt that it would be soon. He faced the week with courage. Only once did his courage fail during his last days on the earth. We will read about that next week."

Show the picture you have been able to get, or show the picture in this book. Say: "This is one of the events during Jesus' last week." Ask the class members to describe what is happening in the picture. They should name the people if they can.

Say: "Let us open our Bibles and study some of the events during the last days of Jesus upon the earth."

INTERPRETATION

Ask an adult to read Matthew 26:1-2. Say: "Jesus completed his fifth and last lesson in verse one. In verse two Jesus told his disciples once again that he was going to be betrayed and crucified. This must have been very hard for Jesus to do. Up to this time, it seems that he was willing to do battle with the religious leaders. Now he is getting ready to die due to their plotting."

Have someone else read verses 3-5. Say: "Caiphas was the high priest. It

was to his home that the religious leaders, especially the Sadducees, went to plan the death of Jesus. Caiphas was willing to cooperate with the Romans. He did not want Jesus to die when the city was full of people observing the Passover Feast and the Feast of Unleavened Bread."

Let someone read Matthew 26:6-13. Say: "Jesus was dining at the home of Simon. While he sat eating a woman came in and anointed his head with an expensive perfume. The disciples were upset by this, saying the perfume could have been sold and the money used to feed the poor."

Continue: "Jesus did not agree with his disciples. He said that the woman had done a beautiful thing for him. In all that dreadful week with its betrayal, arrest, last supper, forsaking of the disciples, this event stands out because of its beauty. The woman loved Jesus."

Ask someone to read Matthew 26:17-25. Say: "Arrangements had been made for Jesus to eat the Passover meal with his disciples. Where were they to eat the meal?" Allow time for answers. Ask: "What happened during the meal?" Then: "Did anyone suspect Judas?"

Ask someone else to read Matthew 26:25-30. Say: "This is a beautiful picture. It is the last supper, when Jesus ate his last earthly meal. What is the meaning of the bread?" Then: "What is the meaning of the cup?" Then: "Do we celebrate this event in our church?"

APPLICATION

Say; "Jesus began his last week among many people. During the week, one by one the people fell away until at last he died on the cross alone. It must have been a terrible feeling that

he had. Yet Jesus was willing to go through this withdrawal and death for us. We can only praise him for his great sacrifice." Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EVENTS BEFORE CRUCIFIXION

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 26:30-27:26; Mark 14:13; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:

Matthew 26:30-27:26

MEMORY VERSE: "... 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt' " (Matthew 26:39b).

TEACHING AIM: I want my students to feel the loneliness that Jesus felt as he moved toward the cross.

TEACHING AIDS: In this lesson, you will do some simple dramatizations. This is role playing. The purpose of role playing is to put someone into the life of another person in so far as that is possible. Then he will be able to feel as the other person felt. You need no advance announcement to the adults. They will participate when the time comes.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 26:30-35: The disciples and Jesus sang a hymn to close the meal. This hymn was probably Psalms 115-118. Then, together, they went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus told them there that they would all fall away from him because of what would happen that night.

Peter was full of self-confidence when he said that he would never fall away. Then Jesus told him that before the cock crowed Peter would deny him three times. The Roman night was split into four watches. The third watch was from midnight until 3:00 a.m., and the fourth was from 3:00 until 6:00. The cock was said to crow between the third and fourth watches. The meaning is that before the dawning of the next day Peter would deny Jesus three times.

Matthew 26:36-46: Jesus and his disciples then went to a private

garden. It may have been a place where Jesus often went. Too, he may have thought Judas would not find him there.

He told his disciples to wait and to watch. This waiting and watching was not to prevent his being seized. He knew he would be. The act was for his support. During this very sorrowful and distressful time Jesus needed the support of his followers.

He left the disciples and went a bit further, where he fell on his face and prayed. He asked that the cup be taken from him. We do not know for sure all that the cup meant to Jesus. Certainly it meant his death, but it may have also meant the loneliness and desolation that he was experiencing.

He returned to find the disciples asleep. This happened three times before he boldly said for them to rise so they could meet the accusers who were coming.

Matthew 26:47-56: While he was still speaking the soldiers and Judas came. Judas kissed him and called him "Master." Then Jesus questioned him as to why he had come.

Peter took a sword and cut off the ear of the slave of Caiphas. Jesus saw this wound, and said that a person who lived by the sword would die by the sword.

Jesus told his accusers that he had taught in their synagogues and no one had bothered him. Then the disciples all fled as Jesus was taken away.

Matthew 26:57-68: When the disciples ran away, we do not know how far they ran, but Peter turned back and followed the group as they went to Caiphas' house.

Caiphas had some false witnesses who came to accuse Jesus. But Jesus remained silent. The high priest asked him once more to confess if he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said that the priest had said so. Then he told him that the Son of man would return in clouds of glory. This was enough for the Sanhedrin. They spat in his face and slapped and struck him.

Jesus had no time to tell what happened inside with the Sanhedrin. Perhaps Joseph of Arimathea or John told what happened.

Matthew 26:69-75: Three times Peter denied Jesus in the courtyard just as Jesus had said he would. And immediately the cock crowed.

Matthew 27:1-2: The following morning the Sanhedrin voted for Jesus to die. He was led away to Pilate who was the appointed governor.

Matthew 27:3-10: When Judas saw the results of his betrayal he took the money back to the priests. Then he went out and hanged himself.

Matthew 27:11-26: Pilate sentenced Jesus to death for treason. He tried several ways to prevent this from happening. He kept asking Jesus to defend himself, then he tried to release Jesus because this was the custom. Finally his wife sent word to him to leave Jesus alone. She had had a

dream about him. Pilate took a basin and washed his hands before the people, saying that he was not guilty of his death. And the people answered that the blood would be upon them and their children.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Our lesson today concerns some very sad events. Jesus felt this sadness. He would be betrayed. All his disciples would leave him. Some of the disciples fell asleep instead of watching and praying. Then he was condemned to death."

Continue: "Today I want us to try to understand the feeling that Jesus had about these events."

INTERPRETATION

Now, using the Scriptures and your Background Study, briefly tell the events in the story.

Begin with the first Scripture in your Background Study, Matthew 26:30-35.

Then read the second Scripture, Matthew 26:36-46. Tell what you wish from your study, then ask the adults to act this out. Have one be Jesus, three others to be Peter, James and John. Let them go through the event just as it happened. When they have finished ask the one who played Jesus how he felt when he came back to find

all his disciples asleep and unaware of the situation.

Follow the same procedure with Matthew 26:47-56.

Tell about Matthew 26:57-68. Read only what you need to from the Bible.

Read Matthew 26:69-75 and act this out. Be sure to ask the one who played Jesus how he felt about what Peter did. You might have Jesus walk along and look at Peter just after the cock crows.

Tell about Matthew 27:3-10.

Read Matthew 27:11-26 and act this out. Again, ask the person playing the part of Jesus how he felt.

If you allow the role playing to take just a few minutes you will be able to finish your lesson on time.

APPLICATION

Ask: "How do you feel now?" For many seeing with their own eyes the event played out before them will make a deep impression.

Ask: "How did Jesus feel about what was happening to him?"

Ask: "Was it just?"

Encourage the adults to discuss these matters as fully as time allows.

Thank each person for their help in teaching the lesson and close with prayer.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CRUCIFIXION

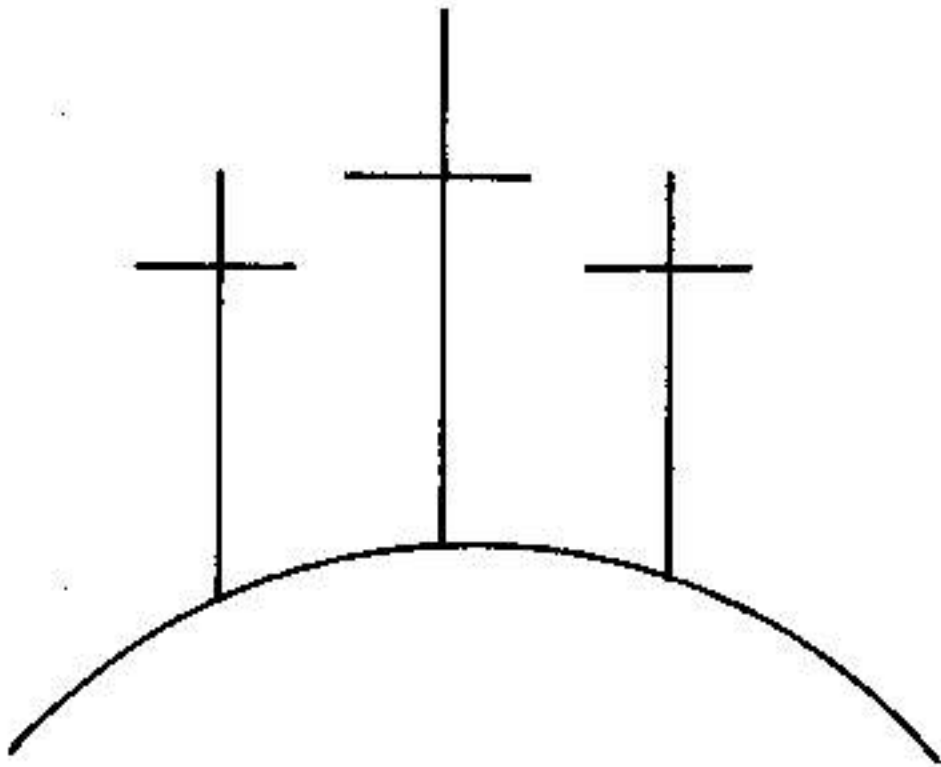
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 27:27-66; Psalms 22

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 27:27-66

MEMORY VERSE: "When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:54).

TEACHING AIM: I will teach my students about the death of Jesus. I want them to understand what his death means to them.

TEACHING AIDS: Draw this sketch on the chalk board or on paper:



PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 27:27-31: When Pilate sent Jesus away, he first had him scourged.

This was a fearful thing. The victim was tied to a post in such a way that he was bent almost double. Then the scourge was laid to his exposed back. The scourge was a long leather thong which was studded with sharpened pieces of bone and bits of lead. The scourging left the victim a bleeding mass of cuts and slashes. Often a person lost consciousness under the scourging. At other times they went mad. Scourging was a necessary part of the crucifixion process.

After the scourging, Jesus was handed over to a group of soldiers who had come with Pilate from Caesarea. These men were not stationed in Jerusalem and knew nothing of Jesus. To them he was only a crazy person who claimed to be a king.

Already bleeding and in great pain, Jesus suffered the additional pain of having a crown of thorns pressed into his head. To the Romans they were mocking Jesus' kingship. Then they took a soldier's coat and placed it upon the bleeding back of Jesus. They handed him a reed to be his scepter. When Jesus was ready the Romans bowed before him giving him "honour" as they would honour a victor.

Matthew 27:32-44: Crucifixion was an agonizing way to die. The victim was marched to the place of crucifixion by four Roman soldiers who formed a square around him. he

carried the cross beam of the cross. The upright beam was already in the ground at the crucifixion site. The victim was taken by a long, circuitous route that allowed for the greatest exposure to the population. This was a warning to them.

Jesus was worn out from a long night of examination and abuse. His scourging had taken all the rest of his waning strength. He could not carry his cross beam. Another, a man named Simon from Cyrene, was forced by the Romans to carry the cross. Probably the man was there only for the Passover. He certainly did not think he would have to do this shameful act.

At the site, Jesus was nailed to the cross with his hands outstretched, and his legs at an awkward angle. Imagine the pain as his body pulled at the nails. He was unable to brush the flies or gnats away from his bleeding wounds. Thirst beset him, but he refused a drink of wine with a painkiller in it. He wanted to remain conscious as long as he possibly could. In this condition he looked down on the people who came to mock him.

The chief priests, scribes and elders came to see the result of their work. They were happy to revile him as he hung there. Others mocked him, as well, even the thieves with him.

The Roman soldiers took his five garments and divided them, casting lots for the valuable outer cloak.

Matthew 27:45-50: From noon until 3:00 p.m. darkness covered the land. Then Jesus cried out with a loud

voice. The bystanders took a sponge filled with vinegar and offered it to him. Then he cried again with a loud voice and died.

Matthew 27:51-61: When Jesus died, the veil in the temple tore from top to bottom and an earthquake shook the land. The graves were opened and many bodies came forth.

When the centurion saw the cosmic consequences of the death of Jesus he was shocked, and acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God.

While the disciples had at points deserted Jesus, only to come back and watch from afar, evidently the women never deserted him. These had followed him from Galilee to cook and care for him.

Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 says that no body should be left on the cross all night long. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in clean linen and placed it in his own tomb. He rolled a large stone over the entrance leaving the women to watch.

Matthew 27:62-66: The Jewish leaders went to Pilate the next day and asked that the tomb be guarded securely. They said that Jesus had said he would rise again. They wanted to make sure that his disciples would not steal the body away and claim that Jesus had risen. So Pilate gave permission for them to seal the tomb and a guard of soldiers was detailed to watch the tomb.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Because this is a long and difficult lesson it will be best if you teach it as a lecture. Be sure to allow questions after each section that you teach.

Begin the lesson by talking about the sketch of crosses you have drawn on the board or on paper. Say: "Jesus died a horrible death on the cross at a place called Golgotha. Golgotha means 'skull' and probably had to do with the shape of the hill. When Jesus died this tortuous death, he died for you. Let us study and see what kind of death it was."

INTERPRETATION

Use your Background Study material as your lecture material. Follow this procedure. Ask a student to read the Scripture portion. Use your Background Study material to

explain the Scripture. Add anything more you wish to. Ask the class members if there are any questions. Answer the questions. Do this for each of the sections. As you teach this lesson, emphasize that the death Jesus suffered was a cruel death and that he died for sinful men.

APPLICATION

Ask: "How do you feel about Jesus' death now? Do you know more about it than you did before? When you hear about God sending his Son to die for your sins, will it have more meaning for you?"

Say: "Although Jesus died a death of great torture and pain, he died willingly. He gave himself for our sins. He was not happy to die, but he died, so that we can be eternally happy living in union with God."

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RESURRECTION

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 28:1-20; Acts 1:8

VERSES IN TODAY'S LESSON:
Matthew 28:1-20

MEMORY VERSE: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

TEACHING AIM: I want to prove to my students that Jesus rose from the grave as he said he would.

TEACHING AIDS: none

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Matthew 28:1-10: On the dawn of Sunday morning, the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary went to the tomb. Other gospel writers say they went to anoint the body of Jesus. Probably the guard at the tomb would have prevented this.

Suddenly there was a great earthquake. The women were shaken. Then, before their eyes they saw an angel of the Lord coming down from heaven. He went to the stone and rolled it away from the mouth of the tomb and sat upon the stone. This showed that he was victorious over the stone even though it was the security of the Roman government.

The angel was dressed in a bright white garment. When the guards saw him, they were terrified and fell down. They were paralysed with fear at what they were seeing.

Then the angel spoke to the women. He told them not to be afraid, but to go and tell Jesus' disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. He would meet them in Galilee.

Quickly the women left the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. They met Jesus on the way. He greeted them in a customary Jewish way. He was the same Jesus they had known. They fell down to worship him. Jesus told them not to be afraid, but to do as the angel had said.

Matthew 28:11-15: While the women ran into the city to tell the disciples the great news, the soldiers recovered from their paralysing fear. They must have checked inside the tomb to see that the body of Jesus was missing. With great fear they went into the city to report to the chief priests what had happened. It is unclear whether these guards were from the same group that crucified Jesus or if these were temple guards. It seems more likely that they were Roman soldiers since they seem to be responsible to Pilate and the Roman government.

The elders of the Jewish religious community advised them to accept a bribe and tell all the people that they

fell asleep and the disciples stole Jesus' body. They promised the soldiers that they would make things right with the Roman government. This is strange since the penalty for falling asleep at a guard post was death.

The story was told as planned. It was still being told among the Jews as truth "to this day", that would have been about 70 A.D. Church history tells us that it continued to be believed for at least another hundred years.

A note on this passage is very interesting. If the soldiers were asleep, how did they know what had happened to the body?

Matthew 28:16-20: The first communication that Jesus had with his followers after his resurrection was to go tell the disciples. They were to go tell. The last communication that he had with his followers before he ascended into heaven was to go tell.

This is the end of the gospel story according to Matthew. In these verses Jesus assured the disciples of his presence with them. Then he commanded them to take up the burden of sharing the good news. He promised them that he would provide them the power they would need to do this great work.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Today we come to the end of the gospel according to Matthew. We have watched many scenes from the life of Jesus unfold before our eyes as we studied these two books on

Matthew. I think we know Jesus better now than we did when we started this study. Do you agree with me?" Allow the adults to respond.

Ask the class members to share either something they learnt in this study that was completely new to them, or else something that they particularly enjoyed.

Say: "Our lesson today is a great one. It is about the resurrection."

INTERPRETATION

Read to the class Matthew 28:1-10. Say: "The women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, went to the tomb at daybreak on Sunday morning. Some say they went to anoint the body for its burial. I do not know how they expected to get into the tomb, sealed as it was. In any event, they arrived at the tomb just as an earthquake occurred. Immediately they saw an angel descending from heaven. How did the angel appear? How was he dressed?" Give time for response from the students.

"The angel went to the tomb and moved the stone. Did the women go in?" Allow time for student response. "The angel then sat upon the stone. Why do you think he did that?" If the students fail to say so, say that it was probably to show that he was victorious over the stone just as Jesus was over the grave.

Ask: "What did the angel tell the women to do?" Allow time for response.

Ask: "What happened to the soldiers?" Say that they were probably unable to move because of the great fear that was upon them.

Ask: "What did the women do?" Allow time for response. Then, ask: "Whom did they meet?" Allow time for answers.

Say: "Jesus greeted the women just as he would have greeted them at any time. The greeting was 'Be glad.' Had it been in our time, it might have been simply, 'Good Morning.' The women were shocked to see Jesus, and they fell down and took hold of his feet in worship. What did Jesus tell the women to do?" Allow time for response. **Say:** "This was the first communication that Jesus had with his followers after his resurrection. He told the women to go and tell."

Read verses 11-15. **Ask:** "What great lie did the temple elders and the soldiers agree to tell?" Allow response. **Say:** "This lie was told among the Jews for about 130 years. The elders gave the soldiers money to lie. Then, they told them they would make things right with the Roman government. A soldier who slept at a

guard post was executed. So they must have had some most unusual plan to convince the governor that all was well and to protect the soldiers."

Read Matthew 28:16-20. **Say:** "The first communication that Jesus had with his disciples after his resurrection was to go tell. What was his last communication?"

Say: "Jesus promised the disciples power and his presence with them as they went to tell."

APPLICATION

Say: "This commandment is still valid for us followers of Jesus. He promises us his power and his presence when we go to tell. What are we to tell?" Allow time for response.

Say: "The word 'go' here does not mean that we are to actually leave the place where we are. Instead, it means 'as we are going' and that means as we are going to the market, to our work, to visit a neighbour we are to tell them the good news of Jesus Christ."

Close the meeting with prayer.