

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

LESSON VI, SECOND QUARTER, INTERNATIONAL SERIES, MAY 8.

Text of the Lesson, Luke xii, 35-48. Memory Verses, 1, 2—Golden Text, Luke xii, 37—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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There is a vast amount of religion or religiousness which is not real. It is merely outward form, like the chaff which has the form of the wheat, but there is nothing within. The scribes and the Pharisees of our Lord's time had an abundance of that kind, and He called them hypocrites, those who play a part, like actors on a stage. In Matt. xiii, He so called them seven times, and in the first verse of our lesson chapter He said, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Leaven in Scripture is invariably something evil, corrupt and corrupting. Even in Matt. xiii and parallel passages it refers to the corrupted food of the church in this present age called the mystery of the kingdom, the teaching which, according to the last part of our lesson, encourages those who profess to be servants, but scoff at the coming of Christ and mingle with the world.

A true child of God and servant of Christ is heartily "with Him," hears the word of God and keeps it, has a single eye to the glory of God, lays up treasure in heaven, in all things seeks the kingdom, has no anxiety about temporal affairs and no fear of death. The man of the world and the hypocrite, on the contrary, are always seeking more of this world and living upon themselves. See chapter xi (23, 28, 34) and the portion of chapter xii up to where our lesson begins.

As the redeemed of the Lord, risen with Christ, our affections are there where He is, at the right hand of God. We believe that our life is hid with Christ in God, that He has given us His kingdom and glory and that we are here as His witnesses to testify of His grace and show forth His praises, ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (Col. iii, 1-3; I Thess. ii, 12; I Pet. ii, 9; I Cor. iv, 2). As such we are decidedly not of this world, but with loins girded and lights burning we wait for our Lord from heaven—"waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," "serving the living and true God and waiting for His Son from heaven" (I Cor. i, 7; I Thess. i, 9, 10). See also I Pet. i, 13.

In verses 37 and 38 of our lesson the attitude is not only waiting, but watching—that is, expecting, for we will not be apt to watch for what we do not expect. It is written in Heb. x, 12, 13, that after the Lord Jesus had offered one sacrifice for sins forever He sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. In Rom. viii, 19-23, not only the whole creation, but believers also who have the first fruits of the spirit, are said to be waiting eagerly and groaning for that redemption time when He shall come again.

We must note the difference between His teaching to Israel in the gospels and the teaching to the church in the epistles concerning His coming again. In the gospels it is generally His coming in glory, as in the Old Testament, with special reference to Israel and the nations, but in the epistles it is His coming to the air for His church (the first stage of His coming), or, if it is the last stage, His coming in glory, then the church is represented as coming with Him. Verse 36 of our lesson cannot be a message for the church except in so far as the "waiting" is concerned, for when our Lord returns with Him, the wedding the church will be with Him.

The last part of our lesson is devoted to the "faithful and wise steward" or the opposite, and the matter of personal responsibility is set forth. Four times we have the phrase "that servant," referring both to real servants and to hypocrites whose portion will be with unbelievers. The wise servant is exemplified in the five wise virgins of Matt. xxv, and the faithful servant is seen in the men with the five and the two talents in the same chapter and in the men whose pounds gained ten and five pounds in Luke xix. The faithful servant is not only rewarded, but who can tell how much is included in the words "ruler over all that he hath" (Verse 44). We cannot but think of "with me in my throne" and "we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. iii, 21; v, 10).

That which our Lord gives us He expects us to use faithfully in His service, giving the gospel to every creature and rightly dividing the word of truth to His redeemed, keeping in view that we must render an account of our stewardship. He wants a people rooted and grounded in love, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith (Eph. iii, 17; Col. ii, 7), and this can be accomplished only by the word of God faithfully ministered by the Holy Spirit through His servants. Dreadful will be the loss of those who have given stones for bread, things intellectual and ethical instead of meat in the season. The stripes will be in proportion to knowledge and opportunity abused.

The servant who is cast out with unbelievers never was a true servant, but one like Judas Iscariot, who was only of the number of the twelve, for a true child of God can never perish (John x, 27-29; Phil. i, 6). All are lost, whether professors of religion or openly ungodly, because they have not received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, but punishment shall be according to desert. All are saved who are redeemed by His precious blood, and all equally saved, for there are no degrees in salvation, but rewards shall be according to faithful service, even as He said, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give every one according as his work shall be" (Rev. xxii, 12). See also I John 5.

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