

## THE LESSON GRADED

## For Teachers of Bible Classes

1. *Jesus' new method of teaching*, vs. 1-3. Have a talk with the class about the parable as a means of conveying truth. Get from the members a definition of the parable. There must be two elements: (a) A saying of some sort, often a story. (b) A spiritual meaning behind the saying or story. Say something about the purpose of the parable: (a) It served to reveal truth to those who showed that they deserved to know it. (b) It served to conceal the truth from those who were lacking in the qualifications for receiving it. Call attention to Jesus' quotation from Isaiah in Mark 4:12. (c) The parable put the truth in such a striking way that it could easily be remembered. Some who did not see the meaning of the story when it was told might remember the story, and see the meaning of it later. What suggests to Jesus the parable of our lesson to-day?

2. *The wayside*, vs. 4, 14, 15. Remind the class of how fields in the East were divided by hard-beaten paths. The seed which fell on these might as well have fallen on a modern street pavement. What sort of hearer of the truth is represented by these beaten paths? Point out that their attitude is such that the truth simply cannot penetrate their minds at all.

3. *The rocky soil*, vs. 5, 6, 16, 17. Be sure that the class understands the nature of this soil,—a superficial coating of earth over a ledge of rock. The growth all goes into the shoot rather than into the root. What is the inevitable effect of a hot sun upon such growth? What sort of hearer is represented by this rocky soil? Was Christ thinking of the multitudes who followed him until he told them of what it really meant to be his disciples? Call attention to the superficialism in matters of religion amongst many people who demand thoroughness in every other sphere.

4. *The mixed crop*, vs. 7, 18, 19. Bring out by questioning that here we have good soil, which has not been weeded of obnoxious growths. The growth of the good seed is longer, and the mischief is brought about more gradually. Point out that the soil can provide only a certain amount of nourishment

and that every growing thorn means a choked grain of wheat. What sort of hearer is represented here? Draw attention to the two troubles emphasized by Christ: (a) The cares of the world, felt most by the poor. (b) The deceitfulness of riches, interfering in the case of the more well-to-do. Recall what Christ said about serving two masters.

5. *The good soil*, vs. 8, 20. Here we have the hopeful aspect of the preaching of the truth. What sort of hearer is represented by the good soil? How can we prepare ourselves for the truth? Have some one read Luke 8:15.

## For Teachers of the Senior Scholars

Picture the scene,—the master seated in a little boat near the shore, the multitude on the land. Jesus is telling them stories, such as they had never heard him tell before. The first of these stories is about a sower who went forth to sow, suggested, perhaps, by some farmer on the hillside who was then sowing his winter wheat. The story tells about the failures and the success of this man's labors. The failures come first, and then the success. The story ends well. It is a story about four kinds of ground.

1. *The Wayside*, vs. 4, 15. Bring out that this was a hard, beaten footpath which ran through the field where the farmer was working, and that crows and sparrows impatiently watched him, ready at the first opportunity to swoop down upon the wayside and carry off the uncovered grain. Bring out that the hard, beaten footpath symbolizes in human life persons of unimpressionable natures, who cannot be influenced for good, into whose hearts the good seed of the kingdom can find no way of entrance.

2. *The Stony Ground*, vs. 5, 6, 16, 17. Question the class about the physical conditions of the field, and show that we have here a picture of a shallow, emotional nature, easily influenced for good, but not capable of retaining good impressions long. Refer to the graphic picture of such a life in Hos. 6:4.

3. *The Thorny Ground*, vs. 7, 18, 19. Note that the hungry briars and brambles take all the good out of the ground and overgrow the wheat, and prevent it from coming to ma-