

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

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HONDURAS

COVER: Many tourists come to Copán to see the pre-Columbian ruins, but Jehovah's Witnesses there are helping people to look to the future

POPULATION

8,111,000

PUBLISHERS

22,098

REGULAR PIONEERS

3,471

Spanish is the official language of Honduras. But 365 publishers in 12 congregations use the Garifuna language. Also there are 11 congregations and 3 groups that use Honduras Sign Language

STUDY ARTICLES

- “This Is the Way You Approved”
- Will You “Keep on the Watch”?

In the first article, we will discuss how Jehovah has guided his people with teaching that is progressively clearer and simpler. In the second, we will examine Jesus' parable of the ten virgins and see how it can help us to keep spiritually alert today.

- Learn From the Illustration of the Talents
- Loyally Supporting Christ's Brothers

In giving the sign of his presence, Jesus related two illustrations that we will consider. One involves slaves who are given talents, and the other speaks of people being separated as sheep are from goats. Learn why Jesus gave these illustrations and how we are involved.

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We Found a More Rewarding Career

AS TOLD BY

DAVID AND GWEN CARTWRIGHT

WHEN Gwen and I were five years old, we began to learn to dance. We had not yet met. But growing up, we each determined to make ballet dancing our career. When we were almost at the top of our profession, we gave it all up. What led to our decision?

David: I was born in 1945 in the county of Shropshire, England. My father had a farm in the peaceful countryside. After school, I would enjoy feeding the chickens and collecting their eggs as well as caring for the beef cattle and the sheep. During school vacations, I helped with the harvest, sometimes driving our tractors.

However, another interest was beginning to take over my life. My father had noticed that at a very young age, I wanted to dance whenever I heard music. So when I was five years old, he suggested that my mother take me to a local dance school for me to learn tap dancing. My teacher thought that I had the potential for becoming a ballet dancer and gave me training for this as well. At the age of 15, I won a scholarship to the prestigious Royal Ballet School in London. There I met Gwen, and we were paired as dancing partners.

Gwen: I was born in the busy city of London in 1944. As a little girl, I had deep faith in God. I tried to read my Bible but found it difficult to understand. Earlier, when I was five years old, I went to dancing classes. Six years later I won a com-



Our professional ballet careers took us around the world to dance

petition, open to the whole of Britain, that awarded the winner a place at the junior section of The Royal Ballet School. This was located at White Lodge, a beautiful Georgian mansion in Richmond Park on the outskirts of London. There I received schooling as well as ballet training from highly regarded teachers. At age 16, I became a senior student at The Royal Ballet School in central London, and that is where I met David. Within a few months, we were performing together in ballet scenes within operas at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, London.

David: Yes, as Gwen noted, our careers led us to dance at the famous Royal Opera House and with the London Festival Ballet (now the English National Ballet). One of the choreographers of the Royal Ballet set up an international company in Wuppertal, Germany, and selected us to be the two soloist dancers he took with him. During our careers, we danced in theaters around the world, performing with such celebrities as Dame Margot



Our wedding day and early married life on the farm



Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev. This kind of competitive life makes one think a lot of oneself, and we became dedicated to our profession.

Gwen: My whole mind and body were devoted to dancing. David and I shared the ambition of getting to the top. I enjoyed signing autographs, receiving flowers, and hearing the applause of the audience. In the theater world, I was surrounded by much immorality, smoking, and drinking; like others in the profession, I relied on my good-luck charms.

OUR LIVES CHANGE COMPLETELY

David: After many years in the dancing profession, I got tired of living out of a suitcase. Since I had grown up on a farm, I began longing for a simpler life in the countryside. So in 1967, I left my career and began to work on a large farm near my parents' home. The farmer let me rent a small cottage. Then I phoned Gwen at the theater and asked her to marry me. She had been promoted to solo dancer and her career was advancing, so she had a difficult decision to make. Still, she accepted my proposal and joined me in a rural life that she knew little about.

Gwen: Yes, it was difficult to adapt to farm life. Milking cows and feeding pigs and chickens in all kinds of weather was far from the world I knew. David began a nine-month course at a farming college to bring him up-to-date with the latest methods, and I felt lonely till he came home at night. By now our first daughter, Gilly, had been born. At David's suggestion, I learned to drive a car, and one day while visiting a nearby town, I saw Gael, whom I had met when she worked in one of the local shops.

Gael kindly invited me to her home for a cup of tea. We shared wedding photos, and her photo showed a group outside a place called a Kingdom Hall. I asked her what sort of church that was. When she told me that she and her husband were Jehovah's Witnesses, I was delighted. I remembered that one of my aunts was a Witness. I also remembered, though, how annoyed and disgusted my father had been with her, throwing her literature into the rubbish bin. I had wondered why my father, normally very friendly, became so angry with such a kind person.

At last I had the opportunity to find out how my aunt's beliefs differed from church teachings.

Gael showed me what the Bible actually teaches. I was amazed to find that many doctrines, like the Trinity and the immortality of the soul, are contrary to the Scriptures. (Eccl. 9:5, 10; John 14:28; 17:3) I also saw God's name, Jehovah, in the Bible for the first time.—Ex. 6:3.

David: Gwen told me what she was learning. I remembered my father saying to me when I was a child that I should read the Good Book. Hence, Gwen and I agreed to have a Bible study with Gael and her husband, Derrick. After six months we moved to Oswestry, in the same county of Shropshire, because we were given the opportunity to rent our own little farm. There Deirdre, a local Witness, patiently continued conducting our Bible study. Our progress was slow at first. Looking after the livestock kept us very busy. Still, gradually the truth took root in our hearts.

Gwen: A big obstacle that I had to overcome was superstition. Isaiah 65:11 helped me to see how Jehovah views “those setting a table for the god of Good Luck.” It took time and prayer for me to get rid of all my good-luck charms and talismans. Learning that “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” made me aware of the sort of person that Jehovah looks for. (Matt. 23:12) I wanted to serve a God who cared for us so much that

he gave his precious Son as a ransom. By now we had another daughter, and it was thrilling to learn that our family could live forever on a paradise earth.

David: When I understood the amazing fulfillment of Bible prophecies, such as those found in Matthew chapter 24 and in the book of Daniel, I became convinced that this was the truth. I realized that nothing in this system of things matched having a good relationship with Jehovah. Thus, as time went on, I became less ambitious. I understood that my wife and daughters were as important as I was. Philippians 2:4 convinced me that I should not center my thoughts on myself and my desire to get a bigger farm. Rather, I should put serving Jehovah first in my life. I stopped smoking. But organizing our lives to get to the Saturday evening meeting six miles (10 km) away was not easy because the cows needed to be milked about that time. However, with Gwen's help we never missed a meeting; nor did we miss taking our girls out with us in the ministry every Sunday morning—after milking the cows.

Our relatives were not pleased with our change. Gwen's father did not speak to her for six years. My parents too tried to stop us from associating with the Witnesses.

We found great joy
serving on international
construction projects



Gwen: Jehovah carried us through these challenges. And as time went by, the brothers and sisters in the Oswestry Congregation became like a new family, lovingly supporting us through our trials. (Luke 18:29, 30) We dedicated our lives to Jehovah and got baptized in 1972. I wanted to work hard to help as many people as possible to know the truth, so I began pioneering.

A REWARDING NEW CAREER

David: The years we worked on our farm were physically hard; spiritually, we tried to set a good example for our girls. In time, as a result of government cutbacks, we had to give up the farm. With no home or employment and with our third daughter just a year old, we prayed to Jehovah for help and guidance. We decided to use our talent and open a dance studio to support the family. Our determination to put spiritual interests in first place bore good fruit. To our great delight, all three of our daughters began pioneering when they finished school. Gwen too was a pioneer, so she was able to give our girls daily support.

After our two eldest daughters, Gilly and Denise, got married, we closed the dance studio. We wrote to the branch office to find out where we could be of help. They directed us to towns in the southeast of England. With only one daughter, Debbie, at home, I too began pioneering. Five years later, we were asked to help other congregations farther north. After Debbie got married, we had the privilege of spending ten years in the international construction program in Zimbabwe, Moldova, Hungary, and Côte d'Ivoire. Then we returned to England to assist with construction at London Bethel. Because of my farming experience, I was asked to help at the Bethel farm that was operating at the time. Presently, we are pioneering in the northwest of England.

Gwen: Our first dedication—to ballet—was enjoyable but fleeting. Our second and most important dedication—to Jehovah—has brought us great joy and is everlasting. We are still partners, but this time we are using our feet to pioneer together. Helping many people to learn precious, lifesaving truths has brought us inestimable happiness. These “letters of recommendation” are better than any worldly fame. (2 Cor. 3:1, 2) If we had not found the truth, we would now have only memories, old photos, and theater programs from our former career.

David: Having a career in Jehovah's service has made a huge difference in our lives. I know it has helped me to improve as a husband and father. The Bible tells us that Miriam, King David, and others expressed their happiness by dancing. And we, along with many others, are longing to dance for joy in Jehovah's new world. —Ex. 15:20; 2 Sam. 6:14.





“This Is the Way You Approved”

“You have carefully hidden these things from wise and intellectual ones and have revealed them to young children.”—LUKE 10:21.

CAN you imagine what it was like to see Jesus Christ become “overjoyed in the holy spirit”? Perhaps you picture his features lit up by a broad smile, his eyes twinkling with pleasure. What was it that moved him so? He had recently sent out 70 of his disciples to preach the good news of God’s Kingdom. He was keenly interested in how they would handle their assignment. There were many powerful enemies of the good news, such as the clever and highly educated scribes and Pharisees. They influenced many to look down on Jesus as a mere carpenter and on his disciples as “uneducated and ordinary men.” (Acts 4:13; Mark 6:3) Nonetheless, the disciples returned from their mission aglow with excitement. They had preached despite opposition, even from demons! What accounted for their joy and courage? —**Read Luke 10:1, 17-21.**

² Note what Jesus said to Jehovah: “I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden

1. What moved Jesus to become “overjoyed in the holy spirit”? (See opening image.)

2. (a) How were Jesus’ disciples like children? (b) What enabled Christ’s followers to grasp vital spiritual truths?

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What recent examples show that Jehovah approves of teaching that is clear and simple?

How has our way of explaining Bible accounts gradually changed?

How has our understanding of Jesus’ illustrations been refined?

these things from the wise and intellectual ones and have revealed them to young children. Yes, O Father, because this is the way you approved.” (Matt. 11: 25, 26) Of course, Jesus did not mean that his disciples were children in a literal sense. Rather, he knew that they seemed to be children compared to the intellectual and highly educated ones in the land, who were wise in their own eyes. More important, Jesus taught his followers to be like children, remaining humble and teachable. (Matt. 18: 1-4) How did they benefit from being humble? By means of holy spirit, Jehovah helped them to grasp vital spiritual truths while the wise and intellectual ones, who scorned them, remained blinded by Satan and by their own pride.

³ No wonder Jesus was so pleased! It made him happy to see the way Jehovah revealed deep spiritual truths to humble people of all sorts, regardless of their education or intellectual gifts. He was delighted that his Father approved of this way of teaching. Has Jehovah changed, and how does he show that he still approves of this kind of teaching? As we examine the answer, we may find that it brings us keen delight, just as it did Jesus.

MAKING DEEP TRUTHS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

⁴ In recent years, the spiritual instruction provided by Jehovah’s organization has reflected an increased emphasis on simplicity and clarity. Consider three examples. First, there is the simplified

3. What will we discuss in this article?

4. In what ways has the simplified edition of *The Watchtower* proved to be a loving gift?

edition of *The Watchtower*.^{*} This edition has proved to be, in effect, a loving gift to those who struggle with language or find reading a challenge. Family heads are finding that their children are now more involved in the study of this journal, the main channel of our spiritual feeding program. Many have written touching expressions of heartfelt appreciation. A sister wrote that she had held back from commenting at the *Watchtower* Study. “I was a wallflower,” she said. Not anymore! After making use of the simplified edition, she wrote: “I now comment more than once, and the fear is gone! I thank Jehovah and you.”

⁵ Second, there is the revised edition of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, released in English at the annual meeting on October 5, 2013.[#] Many Scriptures now use fewer words, yet their meaning is intact or even clearer. For example, Job 10:1 went from 27 words to 19; Proverbs 8:6 went from 20 words to 13. Both verses are clearer in the new edition. In fact, one faithful anointed brother with a record of decades of loyal service commented: “I just read the book of Job in the new edition, and I feel as if I understand it for the first time!” Many have made similar comments.

⁶ Third, consider some of our recent

^{*} The simplified edition was first made available in the English language in July 2011. Since then, a simplified edition has been made available in a few additional languages.

[#] Preparations are under way to make the revised edition available in other languages as well.

5. What are some benefits of the revised edition of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*?

6. How do you feel about the refined understanding of Matthew 24:45-47?

refinements in understanding. For example, our clarified understanding of “the faithful and discreet slave,” published in the July 15, 2013, *Watchtower*, thrilled us. (Matt. 24:45-47) It was explained that the faithful slave is the Governing Body, while the “domestics” are all those who are fed spiritually, whether of the anointed or of the “other sheep.” (John 10:16) What a delight it is to learn such truths and to teach them to new ones! In what other ways has Jehovah shown that he approves of teaching in a simple, clear way?

A SIMPLER, CLEARER APPROACH TO BIBLE NARRATIVES

⁷ If you have been serving Jehovah for decades, you may have noticed a gradual shift in the way our literature explains many of the narratives recorded in the Bible. How so? In times past, it was more common for our literature to take what might be called a type-antitype approach to Scriptural accounts. The Bible narrative was considered the type, and any prophetic fulfillment of the story was the antitype. Is there a Scriptural basis for prophetic pictures? Yes. For instance, Jesus spoke of “the sign of Jonah the prophet.” (**Read Matthew 12:39, 40.**) Jesus explained that Jonah’s sojourn in the belly of the fish—which would have been Jonah’s grave had Jehovah not preserved him alive—was prophetic of Jesus’ own time in the grave.

⁸ The Bible contains other inspired prophetic pictures. The apostle Paul discussed a number of them. For example, Abraham’s relationship with Hagar and

Sarah provided a prophetic picture of Jehovah’s relationship with the nation of Israel and the heavenly part of God’s organization. (Gal. 4:22-26) Similarly, the tabernacle and the temple, Atonement Day, the high priest, and other facets of the Mosaic Law contained “a shadow of the good things to come.” (Heb. 9:23-25; 10:1) It is fascinating and faith-strengthening to study such prophetic pictures. Can we conclude, though, that *every* character, event, and object described in the Bible foreshadows someone or something?

⁹ In the past, such an approach was often taken. Consider, for example, the account about Naboth, whose unjust trial and execution were arranged by wicked Queen Jezebel so that her husband, Ahab, could seize Naboth’s vineyard. (1 Ki. 21:1-16) Back in 1932, that account was explained as a prophetic drama. Ahab and Jezebel were said to picture Satan and his organization; Naboth pictured Jesus; Naboth’s death, then, was prophetic of Jesus’ execution. Decades later, though, in the book “*Let Your Name Be Sanctified*,” published in 1961, Naboth was said to picture the anointed, and Jezebel was Christendom. Hence, Naboth’s persecution at Jezebel’s hands pictured the persecution of the anointed during the last days. For many years, God’s people found this approach to Bible accounts faith strengthening. Why, then, have things changed?

¹⁰ As we might expect, over the years

9. How was the Bible account about Naboth explained in the past?

10. (a) How has discretion led to greater caution when explaining certain Bible accounts? (b) Our literature focuses more on what today?

7, 8. What are some examples of inspired prophetic pictures in the Bible?



Naboth's example teaches us
a powerful lesson
(See paragraph 11)

Jehovah has helped “the faithful and discreet slave” to become steadily more discreet. Discretion has led to greater caution when it comes to calling a Bible account a prophetic drama unless there is a clear Scriptural basis for doing so. Additionally, it has been found that some of the older explanations about types and antitypes are unduly difficult for many to grasp. The details of such teachings—who pictures whom and why—can be hard to keep straight, to remember, and to apply. Of even greater concern, though, is that the moral and practical lessons of the Bible accounts under examination may be ob-

scured or lost in all the scrutiny of possible antitypical fulfillments. Thus, we find that our literature today focuses more on the simple, practical lessons about faith, endurance, godly devotion, and other vital qualities that we learn about from Bible accounts.*

¹¹ How, then, do we now understand the account about Naboth? In much clearer, simpler terms. That righteous man died, not because he was a prophetic type of Jesus or of the anointed, but because he was an integrity keeper. He held to Jehovah’s Law in the face of horrific abuse of power. (Num. 36:7; 1 Ki. 21:3) His example thus speaks to us because any one of us may face persecution for similar reasons. **(Read 2 Timothy 3:12.)** People of all backgrounds can readily understand, remember, and apply such a faith-strengthening lesson.

¹² Should we conclude that Bible narratives have only a practical application and no other meaning? No. Today our

* For example, the book *Imitate Their Faith* discusses at length the lives of 14 different Bible characters. The material focuses on practical application, not on symbolic or prophetic meanings.

11. (a) How do we now understand the account about Naboth, and why does that man’s example speak to us all? (b) Why have our publications in recent years seldom mentioned types and antitypes? (See “Questions From Readers” in this issue.)

12. (a) What conclusion should we not draw regarding narratives recorded in the Bible? (b) Why are we able to have clear explanations of even deep things? (See footnote.)

publications are more likely to teach that one thing reminds us of or serves to illustrate another. They are less likely to present many Bible accounts in a rigid framework of prophetic types and anti-types. For example, we can rightly say that Naboth's integrity in the face of persecution and death reminds us of the integrity of Christ and his anointed. However, we can also be reminded of the faithful stand of many of the Lord's "other sheep." Such a clear and simple comparison has the hallmark of divine teaching.*

A SIMPLER APPROACH TO JESUS' ILLUSTRATIONS

¹³ Jesus Christ was the greatest Teacher ever to walk this earth. One of his favorite teaching methods involved the use of illustrations. (Matt. 13:34) Illustrations paint vivid word pictures that stimulate the mind and reach the heart. Has our literature also come to explain Jesus' illustrations in a simpler, clearer way over the years? The answer is unmistakably yes! Were we not thrilled to gain a clarified understanding of Jesus' illustrations regarding the leaven, the mustard seed, and the drag-net in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2008? We now see clearly that these illustrations apply to God's Kingdom and its

* Granted, God's Word also contains things that may seem "hard to understand," including some parts of Paul's writings. However, all Bible writers were inspired by holy spirit. That same force helps true Christians today to grasp divine truths, making "even the deep things of God" more accessible and clearer to our limited minds.—2 Pet. 3:16, 17; 1 Cor. 2:10.

13. What examples show that we now explain some of Jesus' illustrations in a simpler, clearer way?

phenomenal success in gathering true followers of Christ out of this wicked world.

¹⁴ What, though, about the more detailed stories, or parables, that Jesus related? Some, of course, are symbolic and prophetic; others emphasize practical lessons. But which is which? Through the years, the answer has gradually become clearer. For instance, consider the way we have explained Jesus' parable of the neighborly Samaritan. (Luke 10:30-37) In 1924, *The Watch Tower* said that the Samaritan pictured Jesus; the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, which ran downhill, pictured mankind's downward course since the rebellion in Eden; the thieves on the road pictured giant corporations and profiteers; and the priest and the Levite typified ecclesiastical systems. Today, our literature uses that illustration to remind all Christians that we must be impartial in rendering aid to those in need, especially in a spiritual sense. Does it not make us happy to see that Jehovah makes his teachings clear to us?

¹⁵ In our next article, we will examine another of Jesus' parables—that of the ten virgins. (Matt. 25:1-13) How did Jesus intend his followers in the last days to understand that powerful word picture? As a detailed prophetic allegory, with a symbolic meaning applied to every person, object, and event? Or, rather, did he mean for his followers to use it as a practical lesson to guide them during the last days? Let us see.

14. (a) How have we explained the parable of the neighborly Samaritan? (b) How do we understand Jesus' parable now?

15. What will we consider in the following article?



Will You “Keep on the Watch”?

“Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour.”—MATT. 25:13.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What is the message of the parable of the ten virgins?

How have the anointed applied the message of Jesus’ parable concerning the ten virgins?

In what ways can those of the “other sheep” benefit from the parable of the ten virgins?

IT MUST have been a remarkable thing to sit there on the Mount of Olives—overlooking the temple in Jerusalem—when Jesus uttered one of his most fascinating prophecies. Peter, Andrew, James, and John paid rapt attention as Jesus cast his prophetic gaze far, far into the future. He told them a great deal about the last days of this wicked world system, the time when he would be ruling in God’s Kingdom. He told them that during that climactic time, his “faithful and discreet slave” would represent him on earth, giving his servants the timely spiritual nourishment they needed. —Matt. 24:45-47.

² Next, in that same prophecy, Jesus related the parable of the ten virgins. **(Read Matthew 25:1-13.)** Let us focus on these questions: (1) What is that parable’s basic message? (2) How have faithful anointed ones applied the parable’s

1, 2. (a) What did Jesus reveal about the last days? (b) What questions will we consider?

counsel, and with what results? (3) How can each of us benefit from Jesus' parable today?

WHAT IS THE PARABLE'S MESSAGE?

³ We noted in the preceding article that over recent decades, the faithful slave has gradually come to explain the Scriptures with less emphasis on symbolic prophetic pictures and more on practical application. In the past, our literature at times assigned specific symbolic meanings even to small details of Jesus' parable of the ten virgins, including the lamps, the oil, the flasks, and so forth. Is it possible, though, that we were allowing the spotlight to shift from the parable's simple, urgent message? As we will see, the answer is of vital importance.

⁴ Let us take a look at Jesus' basic message in this parable. First, consider the main characters. Who is *the bridegroom* of the parable? Clearly, Jesus was talking about himself. Why, on a different occasion, he even referred to himself as the bridegroom! (Luke 5:34, 35) What about *the virgins*? In the parable, Jesus says that the virgins have the responsibility to be ready with their lamps lit when the bridegroom arrives. Note the similar directions that Jesus gave to his "little flock" of anointed followers: "Be dressed and ready and have your lamps burning, and you should be like men waiting for their master to return from the marriage." (Luke 12:32, 35, 36) Furthermore, both the apostle Paul and

the apostle John were inspired to liken Christ's anointed followers to chaste virgins. (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 14:4) Clearly, Jesus intended the parable recorded at Matthew 25:1-13 as counsel and a warning to his anointed followers.

⁵ Next, consider the time frame. To what time period did Jesus' counsel apply? Jesus supplies us with a clear time indicator toward the end of the parable: "The bridegroom *came*." (Matt. 25:10) As was discussed in the July 15, 2013, issue of this journal, Jesus' prophecy recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25 contains eight references to his "coming"; in each case, a form of the same Greek word is used. In every instance, Jesus was referring to the time during the great tribulation when he will come to carry out the judging work and then the destruction of this world system of things. Evidently, then, this parable applies during the last days, but its climax comes during the great tribulation.

⁶ What is the parable's basic message? Remember the context. Jesus had just discussed his "faithful and discreet slave." That slave would prove to be a small group of anointed men who would take the lead among Christ's followers during the last days. Jesus warned those men that they must remain faithful. Next, he broadened his focus and gave this parable to admonish *all* his anointed followers in the last days to "keep on the watch" lest they miss out on their precious reward. (Matt. 25:13) Let us now go through the parable

3. In the past, our literature has taken what approach to the parable of the ten virgins, with what possible result?

4. In the parable, how can we discern the identity of (a) the bridegroom? (b) the virgins?

5. How did Jesus indicate the time period when his parable would apply?

6. In light of the context, what is the basic message of the parable?

and see how the anointed have applied its counsel.

HOW HAVE THE ANOINTED APPLIED THE COUNSEL OF THE PARABLE?

⁷ Jesus' parable stresses that the discreet virgins, unlike the foolish, were ready for the bridegroom's coming. Why? Because of two qualities: preparedness and vigilance. The virgins, assigned to this nighttime vigil to wait for the arrival of the bridegroom, needed to keep their lamps burning and to remain alert throughout the long hours until the exciting event. Unlike the foolish ones, though, five virgins truly prepared themselves, bringing extra oil in their flasks along with their lamps. Have faithful anointed ones likewise proved to be prepared?

⁸ They have indeed! Throughout the last days, anointed Christians have acted like those discreet virgins, prepared to carry out their assignment faithfully until the end. They count the cost of faithful service, realizing from the outset that their assignment will mean giving up many of the material advantages available in Satan's world. They devote themselves exclusively to Jehovah and serve him, not with some date or deadline in mind, but out of love and loyalty to him and to his Son. They maintain their integrity, refusing to adopt the spirit of this wicked world and its materialistic, immoral, and selfish attitudes. They thus remain ready, steadily shining as illuminators, undaunted by any apparent delay in the arrival of the Bridegroom.—Phil. 2:15.

7, 8. (a) The discreet virgins proved ready because of what two qualities? (b) How have the anointed proved to be prepared?

⁹ The second quality that helps those virgins to be ready is vigilance. Would it be possible for individual anointed Christians to get sleepy during a long nighttime vigil? Indeed. Note that Jesus says of the ten virgins that "they all became drowsy and fell asleep" during the apparent delay of the bridegroom. Jesus knew well that even a willing, eager spirit may be hampered by the weakness of the flesh. Faithful anointed ones have heeded that implied warning and have worked ever harder to remain vigilant, watchful. In the parable, all the virgins responded to the nighttime shout: "Here is the bridegroom!" But only the vigilant ones endured to the end. (Matt. 25:5, 6; 26:41) What about faithful anointed ones today? Throughout the last days, they have responded to strong evidence that, in effect, cries out, "Here is the bridegroom"—just about to come. They have also endured, keeping ever ready for the Bridegroom to arrive.* However, the climax of the parable focuses on a more specific period of time. How so?

REWARD FOR THE DISCREET AND PUNISHMENT FOR THE FOOLISH

¹⁰ Perhaps the most puzzling part of

* In the parable, there is a distinct interval between the shout, "Here is the bridegroom!" (verse 6) and the actual coming, or arrival, of the bridegroom (verse 10). Throughout the last days, vigilant anointed ones have discerned the sign of Jesus' presence. They thus know that he is "here"—ruling in Kingdom power. They face the challenge of enduring until his coming, or arrival.

9. (a) How did Jesus warn about the natural tendency toward drowsiness? (b) How have the anointed responded to the shout: "Here is the bridegroom"? (See also footnote.)

10. The verbal exchange between the discreet and the foolish virgins raises what puzzling question?

the parable comes near the end, in the verbal exchange between the foolish and the discreet virgins. (**Read Matthew 25:8, 9.**) That exchange raises this question: “When in the history of God’s people would faithful ones refuse help to some who asked for it?” The solution to the puzzle presents itself when we again consider the time frame. Recall our clarified understanding that Jesus, the Bridegroom, comes to render judgment near the end of the great tribulation. Is it not likely, then, that this part of the parable focuses on what happens just prior to that climactic judgment? It would seem so, for by that time the anointed will have received their final sealing.

¹¹ So, then, *before* the great tribulation starts, all the faithful anointed on earth will have received their final sealing. (Rev. 7:1-4) From then on, their calling is sure. But think about the years before the tribulation begins. What would happen to anointed ones who failed to remain watchful, who lost their integrity? They would lose their heavenly reward. Obviously, they would receive no final sealing prior to the start of the tribulation. By that time, other faithful ones would be anointed. When the tribulation starts, the foolish ones might be shocked to see the destruction of Babylon the Great. It may be only at that point that they realize that they are not ready for the arrival of the Bridegroom. At that late hour, if they in desperation ask for help, what would happen? Jesus’ parable gives us the grim answer. The

11. (a) What will happen just before the start of the great tribulation? (b) What did the discreet virgins mean when they directed the foolish ones to the sellers of oil?

discreet virgins refused to give up their oil for the sake of the foolish, telling them to go instead to the sellers of oil. Remember, though, it was “in the middle of the night.” Would they be able to find sellers of oil at that hour? No. It would simply be too late.

¹² Likewise, during the great tribulation, faithful anointed ones cannot help any who had turned unfaithful. There will be no help available. It will simply be too late. What end, then, will such ones face? Jesus explains what happened when the foolish virgins went off on their futile errand: “The bridegroom came. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.” When Christ comes in his glory near the end of the tribulation, he will gather his faithful anointed ones to heaven. (Matt. 24:31; 25:10; John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:17) The door will, indeed, be shut to the unfaithful ones, who prove to be like the foolish virgins. They may, in effect, cry out: “Sir, Sir, open to us!” But they receive an answer like the one that so many goatlike ones receive in that hour of judgment: “I tell you the truth, I do not know you.” How sad!—Matt. 7:21-23; 25:11, 12.

¹³ In view of the foregoing, what may we conclude? Was Jesus saying that many of his anointed servants would prove unfaithful and need to be

12. (a) During the great tribulation, what grim experience will befall any who were once anointed but lost their integrity before the final sealing? (b) What is the end for those who prove to be like the foolish virgins?

13. (a) Why is there no need to conclude that many of Christ’s anointed followers will prove unfaithful? (b) Why may Jesus’ words of warning also be taken as an expression of his confidence? (See opening image.)

The request to get some oil reminds us that no one can be faithful for us or stay watchful for us

replaced? No. Remember, he had just warned his “faithful and discreet slave” never to turn into an evil slave. That did not mean that he expected such an outcome. Similarly, this parable conveys a powerful warning. Just as five virgins were foolish and five were discreet, each anointed one has the full capacity to choose either a course of preparedness and vigilance or a course of folly and unfaithfulness. The apostle Paul was inspired to make a similar point when addressing his anointed fellow Christians. **(Read Hebrews 6:4-9; compare Deuteronomy 30:19.)** Note that Paul’s warning was very firm, but he followed it up with a loving expression of his confidence that “better things” lay ahead of his Christian brothers and sisters. Likewise, the warning in Jesus’ parable is given with loving confidence. Christ knows that each of his anointed servants can remain faithful and receive the thrilling reward!

HOW CAN CHRIST’S “OTHER SHEEP” BENEFIT?

¹⁴ Because Jesus directed the parable of the ten virgins to his anointed followers, should we conclude that this passage contains no benefit for Christ’s

14. Why can those of the “other sheep” also benefit from the parable of the ten virgins?

“other sheep”? (John 10:16) Far from it! Remember, the message of the parable is simple: “Keep on the watch.” Does that apply only to the anointed? Jesus once said: “What I say to you, I say to *all*: Keep on the watch.” (Mark 13:37) Jesus requires all his followers to prepare their hearts for faithful service and to meet the same standard of watchfulness. So all Christians follow the lead set by the anointed in this regard, imitating their good example and putting the ministry first in life. Each of us may also keep in mind that the foolish virgins asked the discreet ones to give up some of their oil. Their vain request reminds us that no one can be faithful for us, can stay in the truth for us, or can keep on the watch for us. Each of us will answer to the righteous Judge whom Jehovah has appointed. We must be ready. And he is coming soon!

¹⁵ All Christians may also benefit from the main event in Jesus’ parable. After all, who of us is not excited about that prospective marriage? The anointed will be there in heaven; after the war of Armageddon, they will become Christ’s bride. (Rev. 19:7-9) Everyone then on earth will benefit from that heavenly marriage, for it guarantees a perfect government for all. Whatever our hope for the future, whether heavenly or earthly, let us be resolved to learn the vital lesson of the parable of the ten virgins. Let us prove ready by preparing our hearts and keeping steadfast, ever vigilant, so that we may enjoy the glorious future that Jehovah has in store for us!

15. Why is the prospect of the marriage of Christ to his bride thrilling for all true Christians?

In the past, our publications often mentioned types and antitypes, but in recent years they have seldom done so. Why is that?

■ *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1950, defined a “type” and an “antitype” this way: “A *type* is an image or representation of something that will come to pass at some future time. The *antitype* is the reality of the thing which the type represents. The type may properly be called a *shadow*; the antitype, the *reality*.”

Many years ago, our publications stated that such faithful men and women as Deborah, Elihu, Jephthah, Job, Rahab, and Rebekah, as well as many others, were really types, or shadows, of either the anointed or the “great crowd.” (Rev. 7:9) For example, Jephthah, Job, and Rebekah were thought to represent the anointed, while Deborah and Rahab were said to foreshadow the great crowd. However, in recent years we have not drawn such comparisons. Why not?

The Scriptures do indicate that some individuals mentioned in the Bible served as types of

something greater. As recorded at Galatians 4: 21-31, the apostle Paul mentions “a symbolic drama” involving two women. Hagar, Abraham’s slave girl, represented or corresponded to literal Israel, which was bound to Jehovah by the Mosaic Law. But Sarah, “the free woman,” symbolized God’s wife, the heavenly part of his organization. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul links king-priest Melchizedek to Jesus, highlighting specific similarities between the two. (Heb. 6:20; 7:1-3) Further, Paul compares Isaiah and his sons to Jesus and his anointed followers. (Heb. 2:13, 14) Paul was writing under inspiration; thus, we gladly accept what he says about these types.

However, even where the Bible indicates that someone is a type of someone else, we should not conclude that every detail or incident in the life of the type is a picture of something greater. For example, although Paul tells us that

TYPE



The passover lamb sacrificed in ancient Israel was a type.—Num. 9:2

ANTITYPE



Paul identified Christ as “our Passover lamb.” —1 Cor. 5:7

Melchizedek is a type of Jesus, Paul says nothing about the fact that on one occasion Melchizedek brought out bread and wine for Abraham to enjoy after he had defeated four kings. Hence, there is no Scriptural basis for finding a hidden meaning in that incident.—Gen. 14:1, 18.

Some writers in the centuries after Christ's death fell into a trap—they saw types everywhere. Describing the teachings of Origen, Ambrose, and Jerome, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains: "They sought for types, and of course found them, in every incident and event, however trivial, recorded in Scripture. Even the most simple and commonplace circumstance was thought to conceal within itself the most recondite [hidden] truth . . . , even in the number of fish caught by the disciples on the night the risen Saviour appeared to them—how much some have tried to make of that number, 153!"

Augustine of Hippo commented extensively on the account where we read that Jesus fed about 5,000 men with five barley loaves and two fish. Since barley was considered to be inferior to wheat, Augustine concluded that the five loaves must represent the five books of Moses (the inferior "barley" representing the supposed inferiority of the "Old Testament"). And the two fish? For some reason he likened them to a king and a priest. Another scholar fond of looking for types and antitypes asserted that Jacob's purchase of Esau's birthright with a bowl of red stew represented Jesus' purchase of the heavenly inheritance for mankind with his red blood!

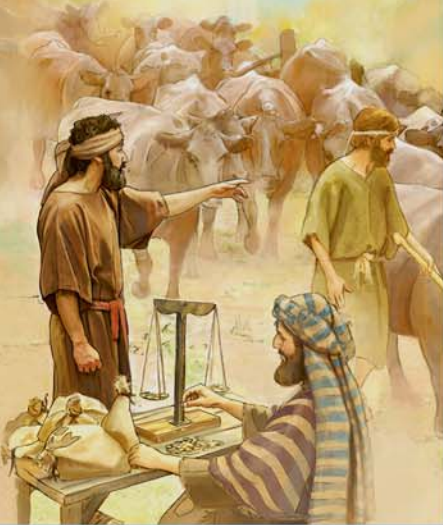
If such interpretations seem far-fetched, you can understand the dilemma. Humans cannot know which Bible accounts are shadows of things to come and which are not. The clearest course is this: Where the Scriptures teach that an individual, an event, or an object is typical of something else, we accept it as such. Otherwise, we ought to be reluctant to assign an antitypical application to a certain person or account if there is no specific Scriptural basis for doing so.

How, then, can we benefit from the events and examples found in the Scriptures? At Romans 15:4, we read the apostle Paul's words: "All the things that were written beforehand were written for *our* instruction, so that through *our* endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures *we* might have hope." Paul was saying that his anointed brothers in the first century could learn powerful lessons from the events that were recorded in the Scriptures. However, God's people in every generation, whether of the anointed or of the "other sheep," whether living in "the last days" or not, could benefit—and have benefited—from the lessons taught in "all the things that were written beforehand."—John 10:16; 2 Tim. 3:1.

Instead of viewing most of these accounts as finding their application to only one class, whether the anointed or the great crowd, and to only one time period, God's people of either class and from any time period can apply to themselves many of the lessons the accounts teach us. Thus, for example, we need not limit the application of the book of Job to the experiences the anointed endured during World War I. Many of God's servants, both men and women, both of the anointed and of the great crowd, have undergone experiences such as Job faced and "have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful."—Jas. 5:11.

Consider: In our congregations today, do we not find older women as loyal as Deborah, fine young elders as wise as Elihu, courageous pioneers as zealous as Jephthah, and faithful men and women as patient as Job? How grateful we are that Jehovah preserved the record of "all the things that were written beforehand," so that "through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope"!

So for these reasons our publications in recent years have emphasized the lessons we can learn from Bible accounts instead of trying to find typical and antitypical patterns and fulfillments.



Learn From the Illustration of the Talents

“He gave five talents to one, two to another, and one to still another.”—MATT. 25:15.

IN THE parable of the talents, Jesus clearly reveals an obligation resting on his anointed followers. We need to understand the meaning of this parable, for it affects all true Christians, whether they have the hope of a heavenly reward or of an earthly one.

² Jesus gave the parable of the talents as part of the answer to his disciples’ question about “the sign of [his] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matt. 24:3) Thus, the parable finds its fulfillment in our time and is part of the sign that Jesus is present and ruling as King.

³ The parable of the talents is one of four related illustrations recorded at Matthew 24:45 to 25:46. The other three—about the faithful and discreet slave, the ten virgins, and the sheep and the goats—are also part of Jesus’ answer to the question about the sign of his presence. In all four illustrations, Jesus highlights traits that would distinguish his true followers in these last days. The illustrations about the slave,

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

Why did Jesus give the illustration of the talents?

When will the Master come to settle accounts?

What lessons do we learn from this illustration?

1, 2. Why did Jesus give the illustration of the talents?

3. What lessons are taught by the illustrations recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25?

the virgins, and the talents are directed to his anointed followers. In the illustration involving the faithful slave, Jesus highlights the need for the small group of anointed ones entrusted with feeding his domestics during the last days to be *faithful* and *discreet*. In the parable of the virgins, Jesus stresses that *all* his anointed followers would need to be *prepared* and to be *vigilant*, knowing that Jesus is coming but not knowing the day or the hour. In the parable of the talents, Jesus shows that the anointed would need to be *diligent* in carrying out their Christian responsibilities. Jesus directs the final illustration, the parable of the sheep and the goats, to those with an earthly hope. He emphasizes that they would have to be *loyal* and give full support to Jesus' anointed brothers on earth.* Let us now focus on the illustration of the talents.

THE MASTER GIVES HIS SLAVES A FORTUNE

4 Read Matthew 25:14-30. Our publications have long explained that the man, or the master, in the illustration is Jesus and that he traveled abroad when he ascended to heaven in 33 C.E. In an earlier parable, Jesus reveals his purpose of traveling abroad, namely, "to secure kingly power for himself." (Luke 19:12) Jesus did not immediately secure full Kingdom power when he got back

* The identity of the faithful and discreet slave is discussed in *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2013, pages 21-22, paragraphs 8-10. The identity of the virgins is explained in the preceding article in this magazine. The illustration of the sheep and the goats is explained in *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1995, pages 23-28, and in the article following this one in this magazine.

4, 5. Whom does the man, or the master, picture, and what is a literal talent worth?

to heaven.* Instead, he "sat down at the right hand of God, from then on waiting until his enemies should be placed as a stool for his feet."—Heb. 10:12, 13.

5 The man in the illustration possessed eight talents, a huge fortune in those days.[#] Before traveling abroad, he distributed the talents among his slaves, expecting them to do business while he was gone. Like that man, Jesus possessed something of great value before he ascended to heaven. What was that? The answer has to do with his life's work.

6 Jesus attached great importance to his preaching and teaching work. (**Read Luke 4:43.**) By means of it, he cultivated a field that had rich potential. Earlier, he told his disciples: "Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting." (John 4:35-38) He had in mind the ingathering of many other honesthearted ones who would become his disciples. Like a good farmer, Jesus would not leave unattended a field that was ripe for harvesting. Hence, shortly after his resurrection and before his ascension to heaven, he gave his disciples the weighty commission: "Go, therefore, and make disciples." (Matt. 28:18-20) Jesus thus entrusted them with a precious treasure, the Christian ministry.—2 Cor. 4:7.

7 What, then, may we conclude? When giving his followers the com-

* See the box "Similarities in the Illustrations of the Talents and the Minas."

[#] In Jesus' day, a talent was equivalent to about 6,000 denarii. Earning a denarius a day, the average worker had to labor some 20 years to earn just one talent.

6, 7. What do the talents symbolize?

Similarities in the Illustrations of the Talents and the Minas

The parables of the talents and the minas have a number of features in common. Both describe a man in authority who before embarking on a journey summons his slaves and commits to them his money, instructing them to increase his belongings. Then, when the man returns, he holds his slaves accountable for the way they used the money. (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27) In both illustrations, the master **1** pictures Jesus, and the slaves **2** picture his anointed disciples. In each account, the master entrusts his slaves with money **3**, which pictures the precious privilege of making disciples. Both accounts also contain a warning about what would happen if Christ's disciples developed the characteristics of a wicked slave.



mission to make disciples, Jesus was, in effect, committing to them “his belongings”—his talents. (Matt. 25:14) Put simply, the talents refer to the responsibility to preach and make disciples.

⁸ The parable of the talents reveals that the master gave to one slave five talents, to another two, and to still another just one. (Matt. 25:15) Although each slave received a different number, the master expected all of them to be diligent in using the talents, that is, in serving to the best of their ability in the ministry. (Matt. 22:37; Col. 3:23) In the first century, starting at Pentecost 33 C.E., Christ's followers began doing business

8. Even though each slave received a different number of talents, what did the master expect?

with the talents. Their diligence in the preaching and disciple-making work is well-documented in the Bible book of Acts.*—Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20.

DOING BUSINESS WITH THE TALENTS IN THE TIME OF THE END

⁹ In the time of the end, particularly from 1919 on, Christ's faithful anointed slaves on earth have been doing

* After the death of the apostles, Satan fomented apostasy, which flourished for many centuries. During that time, there were no sustained efforts to fulfill the commission to make genuine disciples of Christ. But that would all change during “the harvest,” that is, the last days. (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2013, pages 9-12.

9. (a) What did the two faithful slaves do with the talents, and what does that indicate? (b) What role do the “other sheep” play?

business with the Master's talents. Like the first two slaves, anointed brothers and sisters have done their best with what they have. There is no need to speculate about who received the five talents and who received the two talents. In the illustration, both slaves doubled what the master gave them, so both were equally diligent. What role do those with the earthly hope play? An important one! Jesus' illustration of the sheep and the goats teaches us that those with the earthly hope have the honor of loyally supporting Jesus' anointed brothers in the preaching and teaching work. During these critical last days, the two groups work together as "one flock" in zealously carrying out the work of making disciples.—John 10:16.

¹⁰ The Master rightly expects results. As previously mentioned, his faithful disciples in the first century certainly increased his belongings. What about in this time of the end when the parable of the talents finds its ful-

10. What is a powerful feature of the sign of Jesus' presence?

fillment? Jesus' faithful, hardworking servants have carried out the greatest preaching and disciple-making work in history. Their collective effort has resulted in hundreds of thousands of new disciples being added to the ranks of Kingdom proclaimers each year, making the preaching and teaching work an outstanding feature of the sign of Jesus' presence in Kingdom power. Surely their Master must be pleased!

WHEN WILL THE MASTER COME TO SETTLE ACCOUNTS?

¹¹ Jesus will come to settle accounts with his slaves toward the end of the great tribulation just ahead. What leads us to this conclusion? In his prophecy recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Jesus repeatedly mentioned his coming. Referring to the judgment during the great tribulation, he said that people "will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven." He urged his followers living in the last days to be vigilant, saying: "You do not know on what

11. What leads us to conclude that Jesus will settle accounts during the great tribulation?



Christ has entrusted his servants with the precious responsibility of preaching
(See paragraph 10)



Rendering an Account at Death

From the first century onward, anointed disciples have received the talents, and they must render an account for how they fulfill the commission to preach. Those who die faithful before the great tribulation begins

will have received their final sealing by the time of their death. However, Jesus' illustration of the talents focuses on the final accounting for the anointed who are alive on earth at the time of the great tribulation.

day your Lord is coming" and "the Son of man is coming at an hour that you do not think to be it." (Matt. 24:30, 42, 44) Hence, when Jesus said that "the master of those slaves *came* and settled accounts," he was evidently referring to the time when he will come to execute judgment at the end of this system.* —Matt. 25:19.

¹² According to the parable, when the master comes, he finds that the first two slaves—the one given five talents and the one given two—have proved faithful, each doubling his talents. The master says the same thing to both slaves: "Well done, good and faithful slave! You were faithful over a few things. I will appoint you over many things." (Matt. 25:21, 23) What, then, may we expect when the Master, the glorified Jesus, comes for judgment in the future?

¹³ Those represented by the first two slaves—his hardworking anointed disciples—will already have received their final sealing before the great tribulation

* See *The Watchtower*, July 15, 2013, pages 7-8, paragraphs 14-18.

12, 13. (a) How does the master respond to the first two slaves, and why? (b) When do anointed ones receive their final sealing? (See the box "Rendering an Account at Death.") (c) What reward will those judged as sheep receive?

breaks out. (Rev. 7:1-3) Before Armageddon, Jesus will give them their promised heavenly reward. Those with the earthly hope who supported Christ's brothers in the preaching work will have been judged as sheep and will be granted the privilege of living in the earthly realm of the Kingdom.—Matt. 25:34.

A WICKED AND SLUGGISH SLAVE

¹⁴ In the parable, the last slave buried his talent instead of doing business with it or even depositing it with the bankers. This slave showed a bad spirit, for he deliberately worked against the master's interests. The master rightly pronounced him "wicked and sluggish." The master took the talent away from him and gave it to the one who had ten. The wicked slave was then thrown "out into the darkness outside." "There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth" would be.—Matt. 25:24-30; Luke 19:22, 23.

¹⁵ One of the master's three slaves hid his talent, so was Jesus here indicating that one third of his anointed followers would prove to be wicked and sluggish? No. Consider the context. In the

14, 15. Was Jesus indicating that a large number of his anointed brothers would prove to be wicked and sluggish? Explain.

Understanding the Illustration of the Talents



When the Master Rewards the Slaves.

Former explanation:

In 1919, Jesus rewarded his anointed slaves on earth by entrusting them with increased responsibility.

Adjusted explanation:

When Christ comes in the future, he will reward his faithful anointed slaves by raising them to heaven.



The Wicked and Sluggish Slave.

Former explanation:

The wicked and sluggish slave refers to anointed ones in the 1914 era who refused to share in the preaching work.

Adjusted explanation:

Jesus was not foretelling that a group of his anointed followers would make up a wicked slave class. Rather, he was warning his followers about what would happen if they thought and acted in a way that would cause him to view them as wicked and sluggish.

illustration of the faithful and discreet slave, Jesus spoke of an evil slave who beat his fellow slaves. Jesus was not there foretelling that an evil slave class would arise. Rather, he was warning the faithful slave not to display the traits of an evil slave. Similarly, in the illustration of the ten virgins, Jesus was not indicating that half of his anointed followers would be like the five foolish virgins. Instead, he was warning his spiritual brothers about what would happen if they lost their sense of vigilance and did not prove to be prepared.* In this context, it seems reasonable to conclude that in the illustration of the talents, Jesus was not saying that a large number of his anointed brothers during the last days would be wicked and sluggish. Rather, Jesus was warning his anointed followers of the need to remain diligent—to ‘do business’ with their talent—and avoid the attitudes and actions of a wicked slave.—Matt. 25:16.

¹⁶ What two lessons do we learn from the parable of the talents? First, the Master, Christ, has entrusted his anointed slaves with something that he views as precious—the commission to preach and make disciples. Second, Christ expects all of us to be diligent in the preaching work. If we are, we can be sure that the Master will reward our faith, vigilance, and loyalty.—Matt. 25: 21, 23, 34.

* See paragraph 13 of the article “Will You ‘Keep on the Watch?’” in this issue.

16. (a) What lessons do we learn from the parable of the talents? (b) How has this article refined our understanding of the parable of the talents? (See the box “Understanding the Illustration of the Talents.”)



Loyally Supporting Christ's Brothers

"To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."—MATT. 25:40.

JESUS has been speaking to Peter, Andrew, James, and John, his close companions. They have just heard him relate illustrations about the faithful and discreet slave, the ten virgins, and the talents. Jesus concludes his discussion with one more parable. He describes a time when "the Son of man" will judge "all the nations." How this illustration must have fascinated his disciples! In it, Jesus focuses on two groups, one classed as sheep and the other as goats. And he highlights an important third group that he identifies as "brothers" of "the King."—**Read Matthew 25:31-46.**

² Jehovah's people have long been intrigued by this illustration and rightly so, for in it Jesus speaks about the fate of people. He reveals why some will receive everlasting life while others will be cut off in death forever. Our lives depend on our understanding the truths Jesus conveyed and acting on them. With so much at stake, we should ask: How has Jehovah progressively clarified our understanding of this illustration? Why can we say that the illustration emphasizes the

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

How has Jehovah clarified our understanding of the illustration of the sheep and the goats?

Who receive the commission to preach?

Why is now the time to support Christ's brothers?

1, 2. (a) What illustrations has Jesus discussed with his close companions? (See opening image.) (b) What do we need to know about the illustration of the sheep and the goats?

importance of the preaching work? Who is it that receives the commission to preach? And why is now the time to be loyal to “the King” and to those he calls “my brothers”?

HOW HAS OUR UNDERSTANDING BEEN CLARIFIED?

³ To understand the illustration of the sheep and the goats correctly, we need to grasp three key elements of the account: the *identity* of those mentioned, the *timing* of the judgment, and the *reason* for being classified as either a sheep or a goat.

⁴ In 1881, *Zion’s Watch Tower* identified “the Son of man,” also called “the King,” as Jesus. The early Bible Students understood the expression rendered in the *King James Version* “my brethren” to refer to those who would rule with Christ as well as to all of mankind after they are restored to earthly perfection. They felt that the separating of the sheep from the goats would take place during the Thousand Year Reign of Christ. And they believed that people would be classed as sheep because they lived by God’s law of love.

⁵ In the early 1920’s, Jehovah helped his people refine their understanding of this illustration. *The Watch Tower* of October 15, 1923, affirmed that “the Son of man” is Jesus. However, it presented sound Scriptural arguments that limited the *identity* of Christ’s brothers to those who would rule with him in heaven, and it described the sheep as those who hope

3, 4. (a) What key elements must we know to understand the illustration of the sheep and the goats? (b) In 1881, how did *Zion’s Watch Tower* explain this illustration?

5. In the 1920’s, how was our understanding refined?

to live on earth under the rule of Christ’s Kingdom. What of the *timing* of the separating of the sheep from the goats? The article stated that Christ’s brothers would be ruling with him from heaven during the Millennial Reign, so they could not be helped or neglected by an earthly class. Therefore, the separating of the sheep from the goats would have to take place before the Millennial Rule begins. As for the *reason* why a person is identified as a sheep, the article concluded that people would be judged as such because they acknowledged Jesus as their Lord and looked to the Kingdom to bring better conditions.

⁶ As a result of that adjusted understanding, Jehovah’s people felt that individuals were being judged as sheep or goats throughout the conclusion of the system of things, depending on how they responded to the Kingdom message. However, in the mid-1990’s, our viewpoint was clarified. Two articles in the October 15, 1995, issue of *The Watchtower* noted the similarities between Jesus’ words as recorded at **Matthew 24:29-31 (read)** and those at **Matthew 25:31, 32. (Read.)*** The conclusion? The lead article stated: “The rendering of judgment on the sheep and the goats is future.” When, exactly? “It will take place after ‘the tribulation’ mentioned at Matthew 24:29, 30 breaks out and the Son of man ‘arrives in his glory.’ . . . Then, with the entire wicked system

* For a detailed discussion of this illustration, see the articles “How Will You Stand Before the Judgment Seat?” and “What Future for the Sheep and the Goats?” in the October 15, 1995, issue of *The Watchtower*.

6. In the 1990’s, how was our viewpoint further clarified?

at its end, Jesus will hold court and render and execute judgment.”

⁷ Today, we have a clear understanding of the illustration of the sheep and the goats. Regarding the *identity* of those mentioned, Jesus is “the Son of man,” the King. Those referred to as “my brothers” are spirit-anointed men and women, who will rule with Christ from heaven. (Rom. 8:16, 17) “The sheep” and “the goats” represent individuals from all nations. These ones are not anointed by holy spirit. What about the *timing* of the judgment? This judgment will occur toward the end of the great tribulation just ahead. And what of the *reason* why people will be judged as either sheep or goats? The outcome hinges on how they have treated the remaining ones of Christ’s spirit-anointed brothers on earth. With the end of this system so close at hand, how grateful we are that Jehovah has progressively shed light on this illustration and on the related illustrations recorded in Matthew chapters 24 and 25!

HOW DOES THE ILLUSTRATION EMPHASIZE THE PREACHING WORK?

⁸ In the illustration of the sheep and the goats, Jesus does not directly mention the preaching work. Why, then, can it be said that it emphasizes the importance of preaching?

⁹ First, note that Jesus is teaching by means of an illustration. Obviously, he is not talking about separating literal sheep from literal goats. Likewise, he is not saying that each individual judged to be a sheep must literally feed, clothe, nurse,

or visit one of his brothers in prison. Rather, he is illustrating the attitude that the figurative sheep display toward his brothers. He describes the sheep as “righteous” because they recognize that Christ has a group of anointed brothers still on earth, and the sheep loyally support the anointed during these critical last days.—Matt. 10:40-42; 25:40, 46; 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

¹⁰ Second, consider the context of Jesus’ words. He is discussing the sign of his presence and the conclusion of the system of things. (Matt. 24:3) Early in his discourse, Jesus indicated that the sign would include a remarkable feature—the good news of the Kingdom would “be preached in all the inhabited earth.” (Matt. 24:14) And just prior to talking about the sheep and the goats, he related the illustration of the talents. As discussed in the preceding article, Jesus gave that illustration to stress to his spirit-anointed disciples, his “brothers,” that they must zealously engage in the preaching work. However, the small number of anointed ones left on earth during Jesus’ presence face an enormous challenge—that of preaching to “all the nations” before the end comes. The illustration of the sheep and the goats shows that the anointed would have help. Therefore, one of the primary ways that those judged to be sheep show kindness to Christ’s brothers is by supporting them in the preaching work. What, though, is involved in providing that support? Does it consist only of material backing and emotional comfort, or is more required?

7. What clear understanding do we now have?

8, 9. Why are the sheep described as “righteous”?

10. How can the sheep show kindness to Christ’s brothers?



Sheeplike individuals support Christ's brothers in a variety of ways
(See paragraph 17)

WHO ARE TO PREACH?

¹¹ Today, the vast majority of the eight million disciples of Jesus are not spirit-anointed. They have not received the talents that Jesus gave to his anointed slaves. (Matt. 25:14-18) So the question could arise, 'Does the commission to preach really apply to those who are not anointed with holy spirit?' Consider just some of the reasons why the answer is yes.

¹² *Jesus instructed all his disciples to preach.* After he was resurrected, Jesus told his followers to make disciples, teaching them to observe "all the things" he had commanded. Included among those commands was the commission to preach. **(Read Matthew 28:19, 20.)** Therefore, *all* disciples of Christ are to

11. What question could arise, and why?

12. What do we learn from Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 28:19, 20?

preach, whether their hope is to rule in heaven or to live on earth.—Acts 10:42.

¹³ *The book of Revelation indicates that the preaching work would be done both by the anointed and by others.* Jesus gave the apostle John a vision of "the bride," the 144,000 anointed humans who will rule with Christ in heaven, inviting people to "take life's water free." (Rev. 14:1, 3; 22:17) That symbolic water represents Jehovah's provisions for recovering mankind from sin and death on the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice. (Matt. 20:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10) The ransom is central to the message we preach, and the anointed are taking the lead in helping people learn about and benefit from it. (1 Cor. 1:23) But in the vision, John sees others, who are not of the bride class. They too are *told* to say, "Come!"

13. What does the vision seen by John indicate, and why?

They obey and invite still others to take life's water. This second group are those who have the hope of living on earth. Therefore, this vision clearly indicates that *all* who accept the invitation to "come" have the responsibility to preach to others.

¹⁴ *All those bound by "the law of the Christ" must preach.* (Gal. 6:2) Jehovah does not have double standards. For example, he told the Israelites: "One law will apply for the native and for the foreigner who is residing among you." (Ex. 12:49; Lev. 24:22) Christians are not bound by the Mosaic Law. But all of us, whether anointed or not, are subject to "the law of the Christ." That law includes all that Jesus taught. Foremost among Jesus' teachings is that his followers should display love. (John 13:35; Jas. 2:8) And one of the primary ways we show love for God, for Christ, and for our neighbor is by preaching the good news of the Kingdom.—John 15:10; Acts 1:8.

¹⁵ *Jesus' words to a small group can apply to a larger group.* For example, Jesus made a covenant for a Kingdom with just 11 disciples, but that covenant really applies to all of the 144,000. (Luke 22:29, 30; Rev. 5:10; 7:4-8) Similarly, Jesus commanded only a relatively small number of his followers—those to whom he appeared after his resurrection—to preach. (Acts 10:40-42; 1 Cor. 15:6) But all his faithful first-century disciples recognized that the command applied to them, even if they had not personally heard Jesus speak. (Acts 8:4; 1 Pet. 1:8)

14. What is involved in obeying "the law of the Christ"?

15. Why can it be said that Jesus' command applies to all his followers?

Likewise today, Jesus has not personally spoken to any of the eight million active Kingdom preachers. But all recognize their obligation to exercise faith in Christ and to express that faith by means of the witnessing work.—Jas. 2:18.

NOW IS THE TIME TO BE LOYAL

¹⁶ Satan is waging war with the remaining ones of Christ's spirit-anointed brothers on earth, and he will intensify his attacks as the "short period of time" he has left runs out. (Rev. 12:9, 12, 17) Despite having to endure intense testing, the anointed are spearheading the greatest preaching campaign in history. Without a doubt, Jesus is with them, guiding their efforts.—Matt. 28:20.

¹⁷ The growing number of prospective sheep count it a privilege to support Christ's brothers not only in the preaching work but also in other practical ways. For example, they give financial contributions and help to build Kingdom Halls, Assembly Halls, and branch facilities, and they loyally obey those appointed by "the faithful and discreet slave" to take the lead.—Matt. 24:45-47; Heb. 13:17.

¹⁸ Soon the angels will unleash the destructive winds of the great tribulation. This will occur after all the remaining ones of Christ's brothers left on earth have received their final sealing. (Rev. 7:1-3) Before Armageddon breaks out, anointed ones will be taken to heaven. (Matt. 13:41-43) Therefore, now is the time for those who hope to be judged as sheep to support Christ's brothers loyally.

16-18. How can prospective sheep support Christ's brothers, and why should they do so now?



Marry “Only in the Lord” Still Realistic?

“I cannot find a mate within the congregation, and I am afraid of growing old alone.”

“Some men in the world are kind, lovable, and thoughtful. They are not opposed to my religion, and they seem to be more interesting than some brothers.”

Some servants of God have made such comments about finding a marriage mate. Still, they are well-aware of the apostle Paul’s advice to marry “only in the Lord”—counsel that should govern the conduct of all Christians. (1 Cor. 7:39) Why, then, do they make these comments?

WHY SOME HAVE DOUBTS

Those who make such comments may feel that there is an imbalance in the number of eli-

gible brothers and sisters. In many countries, that is indeed the case. Consider two examples: In Korea, on average, out of 100 single Witnesses, 57 are sisters and 43 are brothers. Colombia reports that 66 percent of the Witnesses are sisters and 34 percent are brothers.

In some lands, a complicating factor is that unbelieving parents may demand an elaborate dowry, making it difficult for brothers of modest means to get married. Considering such obstacles, a sister may feel that the possibility of finding a mate “in the Lord” is slim. So she might ask, “Is it realistic to think that I can find a suitable mate among fellow Christians?”*

CONFIDENCE IN JEHOVAH ESSENTIAL

If you have ever entertained such thoughts, rest assured that Jehovah is aware of your situation. Indeed, he knows how you feel about the matter.—2 Chron. 6:29, 30.

Still, Jehovah has set out in his Word the direction to marry only in the Lord. Why? Because he

* In this article, we are considering the matter from a sister’s viewpoint, although the same principles apply to a brother.

knows what is good for his people. Not only does he want to safeguard his servants from the pain resulting from pursuing an unwise course but he also wants them to be happy. In Nehemiah's day when many Jews were marrying foreigners who did not worship Jehovah, Nehemiah referred to the bad example of Solomon. Although Solomon "was loved by his God, . . . the foreign wives caused even him to sin." (Neh. 13:23-26) So for the good of his servants, God has directed us to marry only true worshippers. (Ps. 19:7-10; Isa. 48:17, 18) True Christians are grateful for God's loving care and rely on his direction. By thus submitting themselves to him as Ruler, they recognize him as the Universal Sovereign. —Prov. 1:5.

You surely want to avoid becoming "unevenly yoked" with someone who could take you away from God. (2 Cor. 6:14) Many Christians today have obeyed God's time-proven protective directive and have come to realize that they have taken the wise course. But some have chosen to do otherwise.

STILL REALISTIC

Maggy,* a sister in Australia, explains what happened when she began dating an unbeliever: "I missed a lot of meetings just to be with him. My spirituality dropped drastically." Ratana in India became romantically involved with a classmate who started to study the Bible. However, in time he showed that his motive was to start a romance with her. She ended up leaving the truth and converting to another religion in order to get married.

Another example is that of Ndenguè in Cameroon. She was 19 years old when she got married. Her fiancé promised her that she would be free to practice her religion. But two weeks after their wedding, her husband forbade her to attend Christian meetings. She says: "I found my-

self lonely and weeping. I realized that I had lost control of my life. I felt constant remorse."

Of course, not all unbelieving mates turn out to be cruel and unreasonable. Yet, even if you did not suffer those consequences for marrying an unbeliever, how would your relationship with your loving heavenly Father be affected? How would you feel knowing that you had not listened to the counsel that he provided for your good? And most important of all, how would he feel about your decision?—Prov. 1:33.

Brothers and sisters around the world can testify to the fact that marrying "only in the Lord" is the best policy. Those who are single are determined to make God's heart rejoice, being willing to marry only a suitable mate from among his worshippers. Michiko in Japan is a single sister whose relatives tried to convince her to marry an unbeliever. In addition to resisting the pressure, she saw some of her friends and acquaintances find mates within the congregation. She says: "I kept telling myself that since Jehovah is a 'happy God,' our happiness does not depend on whether we are married or not. I also believe that he grants us the desires of our heart. So if we cannot find a mate even though we want to marry, it is best for us to stay single for the time being." (1 Tim. 1:11) Eventually, Michiko married a fine brother, and she is happy that she waited.

Some brothers have likewise waited to find an appropriate mate. Bill from Australia is one such brother. He admits that he at times felt attracted to women outside the congregation. However, he strictly avoided getting too friendly with them. Why? He did not want to take the first step toward becoming "unevenly yoked" with an unbeliever. Over the years, he was interested in a few sisters, but the interest was not mutual. Bill waited for 30 years before he met a sister with whom he was compatible. Bill says: "I have no regrets." He explains: "I feel blessed because we go out in the ministry together, study together, and

* Some names have been changed.



your needs and your yearnings. He does not promise anyone a mate. Yet, if you really need a marriage mate, God knows the best way to satisfy your legitimate desires.—Ps. 145:16; Matt. 6:32.

Sometimes you may feel like the psalmist David, who said: “Do answer me quickly, O Jehovah; my strength has come to an end. Do not hide your face from me.” (Ps. 143:5-7, 10) At such times, give your heavenly Father time to show you what his will is for you. You can do that by taking time to read his Word and to ponder over what you are reading. You will know what his commandments are and will see how he acted in behalf of his people in the past. By listening to him, you will have renewed confidence in the wisdom of obeying him.

What else can make your single years happy and productive? You can use your singleness to cultivate spiritual discernment, generosity, industriousness, pleasantness, godly devotion, and a good reputation—invaluable for a happy family life. (Gen. 24:16-21; Ruth 1:16, 17; 2:6, 7, 11; Prov. 31:10-27) Seek first the Kingdom by having a full share in the preaching work and other Christian activities; your doing so will be a protection. Bill, mentioned earlier, says about the years when he wanted to marry: “They passed so quickly! I used the time in Jehovah’s service as a pioneer.”

Yes, marrying “only in the Lord” is still realistic. Obeying that direction can help you to honor Jehovah and reap lasting satisfaction. The Bible says: “Happy is the man who fears Jehovah, who takes great pleasure in his commandments. Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness continues forever.” (Ps. 112:1, 3) So be determined to stick to the divine commandment to marry “only in the Lord.”

Single ones are valuable in the congregation, often assisting families and young ones

worship together. I am happy to meet and associate with my wife’s friends because they are all fellow worshippers of Jehovah. We work on our marriage using Bible principles.”

WHILE WAITING ON JEHOVAH

What can you do while you leave things in Jehovah’s caring hands? One thing is to think about why you are not married. If you feel that the main reason is based on the Bible directive to marry “only in the Lord,” you are to be commended for respecting that divine command. Be assured that Jehovah is pleased with your firm resolve to obey his Word. (1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 27:11) You can continue to ‘pour out your heart’ to God in prayer. (Ps. 62:8) Your prayers can become even more meaningful as you petition him earnestly and incessantly. Your relationship with God will be strengthened day by day as you stand firm despite the internal and external pressures you face. Rest assured that the Most High takes an interest in all his faithful servants and that you are precious in his eyes. He cares about



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