



“And he spake a parable . . .”

The parables of Jesus as recorded by Luke



Theme Thoughts

Jesus, the greatest of all teachers, often chose to instruct His followers by means of parables—making a comparison between earthly things with which people are familiar, and spiritual things with which they are not so familiar. The Scriptures teach that there is a striking analogy between the natural and the spiritual. Therefore, Christ's parables were not riddles; they were intended to reveal truth to those who love Him. He told His disciples that it was given unto them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. But to those who loved darkness rather than light, the meanings of the parables were hidden. Matthew 13:10-15

The parables recorded in the Gospel of Luke are remarkable for their simplicity. Jesus sought to put the truth in a form that would bring it within the grasp of man's finite mind. And we read that "the common people heard him gladly."

In this quarter we will focus on eleven of the parables given by Jesus as recorded by Luke, a writer who emphasized Christ's sympathetic attitude toward the poor, the lowly, and the outcast. The objective for each lesson indicates the point the parable makes relative to our lives today. The Christmas lesson features the account of Christ's birth as given by Luke.

The final lesson of this quarter will be an overview or summary of the material covered during the preceding weeks. May God bless you as we study these lessons together.

The Two Debtors

TEXT: Luke 7:36-50

KEY VERSE: Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. — Psalm 85:2

Visualize, if you can, the disdain of the outwardly “righteous” Pharisee, Simon, when a sinful woman enters his home uninvited and seeks the company of Jesus. Consider his contempt as Christ allows this woman to wash His feet with her stream of tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head. But Jesus knew why she came and she received forgiveness for her sins. Jesus said to her, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

1. To seek for forgiveness and to forgive others are necessities in one’s life in order to find favor with God (Matthew 6:14,15). Write your own definition of what it means to forgive.

2. Sin could possibly be divided into three categories: sins of commission, sins of the heart, and sins of omission. Give examples of each.

3. Jesus’ forgiveness is offered to all, but that forgiveness must be sought. Contrast the attitudes of the woman and Simon the Pharisee.

	4. What do you think is meant by the following words?
	Repentance
	Contrition
	Humility
	Godly Sorrow
	5. In reference to question four, how do these words relate to our finding God's forgiveness?
	6. What were the actions of the woman in our text that showed she was seeking forgiveness?
	7. Give in your own words the meaning of Jesus' saying: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."
	8. That the sinful woman loved Jesus much was obvious by her actions. How can we show our love to Christ as well as saying we love Him?
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Sower and the Seed

TEXT: Luke 8:4-15

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13

KEY VERSE: But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. — Matthew 13:23

God's Word brings life and spiritual fruit into the lives of those who receive it into their hearts. They must also believe and be obedient to His Word. But the life-giving power of God's Word can do nothing but condemn if not received in the heart by faith. "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). Jesus brought out the necessity of having a receptive heart in this parable of the Sower and the Seed.

1. A parable is an allegorical story from which a moral message or religious truth is taught. Why do you think Christ spoke in parables?

2. What happened to the seed that fell by the wayside and to what was this likened? What type of ground would you expect to find by the wayside?

3. What circumstances might cause the devil to take the Word from our hearts? What can be done to prevent this?

	4. What might the lack of moisture mentioned in verse 6 mean? What is the source of the needed moisture?
	See Jeremiah 17:13 and John 4:14.
	5. In reading verse 13 of the text, how can temptation cause failure of the seed to bring forth fruit?
	6. Explain in your own words how you feel the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life choke the Word.
	Cares
	Riches
	Pleasures
	7. How can we really hear with our hearts and “keep it”? The Word gives us many suggestions. Look up the following Scriptures and identify what action should be taken.
	Psalms 84:4
	Proverbs 4:14
	Ephesians 6:11
	Ephesians 6:18
	2 Timothy 2:15
	Hebrews 11:6
	Revelation 22:14
	8. Read John 15:2 and note what happened to the non-fruit-bearing and fruit-bearing branches. Explain what you think is meant by this verse.
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A Friend at Midnight

TEXT: Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Matthew 26:36-46

KEY VERSE: And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. — Luke 11:9,10

RESOURCE MATERIAL: Tract No. 57 — Prevailing Prayer

Jesus had much to say during His ministry about effectual, prevailing prayer. He gave several parables showing the importance of praying. He also left us a beautiful example by His personal prayer life. His disciples wanted Him to teach them how to pray. He gave them as a model the “Lord’s Prayer,” and told them what was necessary to pray a prayer that would be heard and accepted by God. The Bible also provides examples of others who prayed and received answers.

1. In both of the parables given in our text, requests were being made of someone who had no desire to supply the need. How does this contrast with God’s response when we come to Him with a need?

2. What does it mean to importune? How can we apply this to the requests we make in prayer to the Lord?

3. The principal verses in Jesus’ two parables are Luke 11:8 and 18:5. They show the reason the requests were granted. How can we profit spiritually by following these examples in our prayers?

	4. Many times discouragements will come when we are desiring something from the Lord. Sometimes others may try to discourage us. Read the accounts of the blind beggar in Luke 18:35-43, and the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:22-28. How might you have reacted in the same situation?
	5. Sometimes a lengthy period of time may pass without any seeming answer from the Lord. Elijah and Daniel, two great men of God, both went through such times (1 Kings 18:42-44 and Daniel 10:1-13). What was the answer they received for their waiting?
	6. Elijah's servant saw a little cloud, like a man's hand. What action did Elijah take and what spiritual attribute do we see exhibited here? Read Hebrews 11:1.
	7. Jesus said that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. What is the meaning of the word <i>faint</i> and how can it be applied to our prayer life?
	8. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for praying to be seen of men, and for the use of vain repetitions (Matthew 6:5-7). What is the difference between these kinds of prayers and the importuning prayer that Jesus commended?
	9. What encouragement can we receive from Abraham's prayer life and his faith in God in times when he had to wait?
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The Christmas Story

TEXT: Luke 2:1-20

KEY VERSE: But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. — Micah 5:2

For centuries the coming of the promised Messiah had been the cherished hope of God's people. Now on this first Christmas night, the promise became reality. Jesus came to earth in the likeness of man to dwell among men. He was God's Gift to the world, but came willingly to pay the price of man's redemption. Jesus knew that the Cross lay at the end of His earthly pilgrimage, but His only desire was to do the will of His Father. God desires only one thing of us in return for the love He has manifested—that we do His will.

1. Joseph was directed by the angel of the Lord to name Mary's Son "Jesus." This name means "Savior," "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). What significance does this truth have in our time?

2. In what city was the Christ Child born? Why is this birthplace more than just a coincidence? See Micah 5:2.

3. From what royal lineage did Jesus come? How can this be proved (Matthew 1:1-16; 22:42)? Does this mean, then, that the Gentiles are excluded from God's plan of salvation? See Ephesians 2:12-18.

4. Why was Christ laid in a manger? What does this seem to indicate? See 2 Corinthians 8:9.

	5. Who heard the announcement of Christ's birth ? Why was the proclamation made to this sort of people, rather than to the scribes and priests? See Luke 2:15-20.
	6. The angel proclaimed to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11). Compare the angel's announcement with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Which is the greater, and why?
	7. The shepherds believed the message of the angels, and left their sheep and went quickly to see the Savior. How should men respond to the story of Christ today?
	8. How did Mary react to the news concerning the angel's proclamation? What advantage can be gained by meditating on God's Word? See Joshua 1:8.
	9. "God so loved . . . he gave" (John 3:16). Who does God love and what did He give on that first Christmas night?
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Watchful Servants

TEXT: Luke 12:35-48

KEY VERSE: Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning. — Mark 13:35

After Jesus fulfilled His mission on earth He went back to Heaven; but He is returning very soon to take His people unto Himself. The question is asked, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2). One meaning of *abide* is "to face or to submit without shrinking." The verse does not mean that no one will be able to stand, for the Christians are preparing themselves, and we can all be ready. We can see from our text that an acceptable service must be rendered with watchfulness and prayer, that we may be ready at any moment for the Lord's return.

1. *To watch* is "the act or fact of keeping awake, especially to be attentive or vigilant." How does this word pertain to our lesson today?

2. In reading the first two verses of our text, how would you describe the attitude of the ones who were waiting? Which portions of these verses give you this indication?

3. According to our text, the coming of Christ will be as a thief. If you knew a thief was likely to come to your house, what measures would you take?

	4. The Lord will return for those who look for Him, and for those who are ready. How can we be ready for His return?
	5. How could a person show by his actions that in his heart he is saying, “My Lord delayeth his coming”?
	6. One of the requirements for being ready for the Lord's return is that we be good stewards. Give a definition of stewardship. How does this relate to the Christian experience?
	7. According to our text, what were the consequences suffered by the servants who had not been faithful in performing their duties and were not watching for their lord's return? What parallel can you draw between this and the fate of one who neglects his responsibilities as a Christian and fails to be watchful for Jesus' return?
	8. Referring to our key verse, when will the Master return?
	Thought provoker: Are you ready for the Lord's return if He should come at this moment?
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The Fig Tree

TEXT: Luke 13:6-9; John 15:1-8

KEY VERSE: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. — John 15:2

Jesus often used trees, gardens, vines, branches, and fruit to teach lessons of truth. A Christian life is like a tree—not just a tree with leaves, but a tree that bears good fruit. As in the natural, fruit is the product of plant growth, so it is only by spiritual growth that man bears fruit unto the Lord. Without growth, one becomes fruitless, resulting in eternal punishment. However, as one walks in the commandments of God, he is able to bear the fruit expected of him.

1. On various occasions, Christ used the fig tree as a symbol of the Jewish nation. This parable illustrated the patience of God with Jerusalem, whose day of doom was approaching because of their failure to show forth the fruit of righteousness. However, there is also a warning in it for individuals. Explain how you feel this parable applies to us.

2. What did the dresser of the vineyard do to try to improve the fig tree's production?

3. Why did the owner of the vineyard have the right to expect fruit?

	4. Looking at our text in John 15, how are we to bring forth fruit? Explain.
	5. What does God do to the fruit-bearing branches? How much fruit must we bear?
	6. God cares for every branch. Each has the same nurturing and opportunity to bear good fruit. Each receives the “sunshine and rain” of God’s love. What happens to the branch that does not bear fruit?
	7. What fruit does God expect to see in a life? Give a specific example of how each one is a spiritual benefit.
	8. If one discovers he is not bearing as much fruit as he should, what do you think he should do to improve?
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Chief Rooms; Publican and Pharisee

TEXT: Luke 14:7-14; 18:9-14

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Isaiah 57:15; Micah 6:8; James 4:10

KEY VERSE: All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. — 1 Peter 5:5

Doing things which appear right before others does not guarantee a right standing in the sight of God. Jesus probed the hearts of the men who were invited to the dinner as they sought the chief rooms in which to eat, and told a parable about taking the lower place. The parable also brought out that one should not invite his friends, relatives, and rich neighbors to his dinners, but rather the poor, lame, maimed, and blind. Our motives will determine our reward. Humility, not self-exaltation, is a hallmark of the Gospel. This is demonstrated again in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

1. Why do you think that those who had been invited to dinner by one of the Pharisees chose the chief rooms in which to eat?

2. How could church meetings be a possible place of testing a Christian's motives in regard to "place seeking"?

3. Why did Christ advise the chief Pharisee not to call friends, brethren, kinsmen, or rich neighbors to his feasts?

4. Whom did Jesus advise the Pharisee to call to his feast? Why?

	5. What was commendable about the Pharisee who went up to the Temple to pray? What was abhorrent to God about the same Pharisee?
	6. What did the posture and actions of the publican in our text indicate about his approach to God?
	7. Why is it so difficult for people to pray the simple, one-sentence publican's prayer? Why is it vital that they do?
	8. Explain the difference between the publican's justification and the Pharisee's.
	9. Explain Luke 14:11, "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."
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The Great Supper

TEXT: Luke 14:16-24

KEY VERSE: A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. — Luke 14:16-18

Jesus had no illusions as to the general reception of His Kingdom. He knew that many, from the religious leaders of His own nation and people of the nation itself, to the distant Gentiles, would flout Him and His offer of eternal redemption. They would give the most trivial excuses, preferring for themselves the husks of the world. Webster defines the word *excuse* as “1. a plea or explanation given in defense of one’s conduct, 2. a release from obligation, duty, etc., 3. something that excuses; an extenuating or justifying factor, and 4. a pretended reason for conduct; a pretext.”

1. Study the definitions of *excuse*. In our parable, all who were invited requested that they be excused. Which of the four definitions best applies?

2. The man who had bought the field asked to be excused from the feast. What are some of the excuses offered today for not serving God? What is the basic reason behind all these excuses?

3. One of the most commonly offered rationalizations for making an excuse in our day is the thought, I’ll do it later. What is the danger of procrastination regarding one’s eternal destiny?

	4. What was Adam's excuse for having eaten the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:12)? Did God excuse Adam? Why or why not?
	5. The man who had married a wife said, "I cannot come." In reality, do you think he could have gone? Explain.
	6. If you were a pastor, how would you want a person to react when you asked him to do something in God's service? With reference to this thought, explain 2 Corinthians 8:12.
	7. What often results when one asks to be excused from doing a specific task in God's service?
	8. What is the feast to which all are invited (Revelation 19:9)? What awaits those who accept the invitation to God's great feast?
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The Lost Sheep

TEXT: Luke 15:1-10

KEY VERSE: How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?
— Matthew 18:12

Our text for this lesson reveals the love and compassion of Jesus. This is portrayed as the shepherd's seeking his one lost sheep and the woman's searching for her lost coin. It brings out the helplessness of some who are lost, as well as the needs of those who are lost and do not realize it. Jesus is seeking for both. He gave these parables to the scribes and Pharisees to show how much He loves and values even one soul, and to show the joy in Heaven when a sinner repents.

1. The scribes and Pharisees complained, saying that Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Why was this complaint inappropriate?

2. Who were the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-7)? In what way did they fall short of Jesus' expectations of them?

3. In what respect are we all like sheep who have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6)? Explain your answer.

4. Who rejoices when a sinner is saved?

5. Think of your concern for a loved one who is unsaved, and list several things you could do to help bring that one to the Lord. How is the value of a lost soul shown in the parable of the Lost Coin?

6. How does the woman's reaction to finding her lost coin, coincide with the words of Christ in Luke 5:32?

7. Describe the differences in the awareness of the sheep and the coin in regard to their lost condition.

8. What is repentance? See 2 Corinthians 7:10.

The Prodigal Son

TEXT: Luke 15:11-24

KEY VERSE: And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. — Luke 15:21

RESOURCE MATERIAL: Tract No. 51 — Prayed Out — Stayed Out

The prodigal son may have enjoyed the pleasures of sin, but it was only “for a season.” Sin, as he discovered, has a kickback. The straits into which the prodigal son was brought in the far country is a typical example of the degradation which a man can reach who has cast to the winds the restraints of Christian teaching. His only hope is to come to himself and ask forgiveness of the One against whom he has rebelled.

1. Since there was plenty at his father’s house, what motive prompted the young man to leave?

2. Arriving at his destination in a “far country” was not an instantaneous happening. The prodigal son went step by step, farther and farther away from his father’s house. Each step was an act of will, another decision or action which took him even farther from the benefits and blessings of home. Parallel this to the steps taken by one who is moving away from the blessings and benefits of Christianity.

3. We read that the young man had “spent all.” What is meant by that expression? Draw a spiritual parallel, explaining why sin is expensive.

4. When the young man was in want, what was provided for him by his friends? What was his initial attempt to help himself?

5. What does the phrase, “he came to himself” mean?

6. What did the young man resolve to do, and how can we liken this to the actions of a sinner who wants out of the life of sin?

7. How was the son received by the father? How does the heavenly Father receive the repentant sinner?

8. The first request the son had made was “Father, give me . . .” inferring that he felt he had some rights to his father’s possessions. What request was the young man proposing to ask of his father when he left the “far country” and what change of attitude did this show?

9. Who would you say is the most outstanding character in the lesson and why?

The Unjust Steward

TEXT: Luke 16:1-13

KEY VERSE: His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. — Matthew 25:21

Jesus gave an account of a man who was steward for a wealthy and influential lord. The steward had absolute and complete control over the goods of his master. He was accused of wasting his master's goods, and when he heard that he was going to be called to give an account of his stewardship, he began to scheme how he could provide for his immediate future. His plan was clever enough that even his lord commended his foresight. Jesus added that often the children of this world are wiser than the children of Light (God's children). They spend more effort in securing their immediate future than some children of Light spend in making provision for their eternal future.

1. What was the method the steward used to gain favor with his lord's debtors?

2. The lord spoken of in this parable is the owner of an earthly estate, not the Lord of Heaven. The lord recognized that, though the steward had not been faithful in the management of his goods, he had acted wisely in his own behalf. Draw a parallel between the steward's actions and the actions of worldly people in our day.

	3. Worldly people often take advantage of present opportunities. The children of light have spiritual and eternal advantages promised to them, but they are sometimes seemingly indifferent and slow to take positive actions. Why did Jesus emphasize over and over again that spiritual values are more important than earthly rewards?
	4. Fill in the blanks: "He that is faithful in that which is _____ is faithful also in _____." Is this true in a physical sense as well as in a spiritual sense? Give examples. See Luke 19:17-19.
	5. In your estimation what are the true riches?
	6. Give the meaning of verse 12, using your own words.
	7. According to verse 13, how many masters can we serve? Why?
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The Wicked Husbandmen

TEXT: Luke 20:9-19

KEY VERSE: He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. — Isaiah 53:3

Jesus' parables were given to provide spiritual lessons. In this story the religious leaders of God's chosen people are likened to wicked husbandmen of the vineyard which their lord had planted. Through the years God sent prophets to Israel instructing and admonishing them to be obedient and to do right, that they might be a fruit-bearing vineyard. But the leaders, on the whole, treated the prophets shamefully, wounding some and killing others. Finally God sent His only begotten Son, but they rejected Him also, causing Him to be crucified.

1. Against whom was Jesus directing this parable? Compare their reaction to the reaction of a sinner confronted with evidence of his wrongdoing.

2. What did Jesus mean in the parable when He said God would destroy those husbandmen and give the vineyard to others (Matthew 21:41,43)? What impact does this have on us?

3. In reference to the answer for question two, when did this happen? See Acts 10:34,35,44,45.

4. What is meant by the prophecy which Jesus quoted in our text, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner"? See Acts 4:10,11.

5. Jesus said, “Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:44). How would you explain this?

6. Do you think the Gentiles as a whole are treating Jesus any better today than the Jews did? Give reasons for your answer.

7. Many who are rejecting Christ today, and giving Him little or no thought, seem to be prospering materially. After reading Ecclesiastes 8:11-13, what are your feelings as to the end result in the lives of those who are turning Christ's love aside?

8. Some do not outwardly deny Christ or reject His deity, but continually neglect to do anything about their soul's salvation. What danger is there in following such a pattern in one's life? See 1 Thessalonians 5:2,3 and Hebrews 2:3.

9. God's Spirit departed from the Jews and turned to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected Christ. In these days, the Gentiles' rejection of Christ will cause God to turn back to the Jews (Luke 21:24; Romans 11:19-22). What does this tell us concerning God's time for us? See 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Quarter Review

TEXT: Review Quarter Texts.

KEY VERSE: All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.
— Matthew 13:34,35

Look back over the last twelve lessons we have studied. We have examined individual parables that have to do with different aspects of becoming a Christian and living a Christian life. In this lesson, we will review several of these illustrations showing Christ's plan for our salvation and the ways we can be a fruit-bearing Christian.

1. God's love for lost mankind was beautifully proved when He gave His only Son for our salvation. His concern for the sinner is illustrated by the parable of the lost sheep. To what length will the Lord go to restore one who has gone astray? See Luke 15:4.

2. What was the turning point in the life of the prodigal son (Luke 15:17)? Compare this to the first step a sinner must take in turning to the Lord.

3. When we truly realize our need for salvation, the next step should be to seek for the forgiveness promised by God. Define forgiveness, and then explain the direct relationship between one's love for the Lord, and the amount of forgiveness that one has received. See Luke 7:47.

	4. People who hear the Word of God, both before and after they are saved, seem to respond in different ways.
	How do the different types of soil spoken of in the parable of the sower relate to the response of a human heart (Luke 8:4-15)? In what way is the word “receptivity” a key to the explanation of this parable?
	5. If we have received the Word of God in our hearts, there will be outward evidences of this. Explain the importance of bearing fruit, and list several kinds of spiritual fruit that the Lord is looking for in our lives.
	6. God calls all Christians to serve Him, and willingness to work for Him is a part of the spiritual fruit He desires to see in our lives. What will be the final outcome of the people who persistently excuse themselves from the service of the Lord?
	7. Prayer is a vital aspect of keeping close to the Lord in our daily lives. Praying in faith and believing are important, but Luke 11:8,9 brings out another key element in receiving an answer to one’s prayers. What is it and why is it important?
	8. The most important focus of our Christian life is anticipation of the Lord’s return to earth, and making sure we are ready for this event. Using the words “uncertainty” and “certainty” as a basis, explain why it is so important to be ready and watching for Christ’s second coming. See Luke 12:39,40.
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