

KINGDOM.

LESSON 1

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God's kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> GENESIS 22, 24, 27 and 28
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Genesis chapters 22, 24, 27 and 28). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[THE KINGDOM OF GOD]</i> (1) JOHN 3:3,5
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The ninth series of memory verses (series I) is about "The kingdom of God". The titles of the five memory verses are: (1) Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5.

(2) Welcome children into the kingdom: Luke 18:16-17

(3) Preach the gospel of the kingdom. Matthew 24:14.

(4) Never look back from serving in the kingdom. Luke 9:62.

(5) The triumph of the kingdom. Daniel 2:44.

Meditate, memorise and review.

(1) Enter into the kingdom. John 3:3,5. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born again. I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) <i>[THE PARABLES OF JESUS]</i> THE STRONG MAN BOUND
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"The parable of the strong man bound" in Matthew 12:29 is a parable about THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

"A parable" is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is a true-to-life story or illustration designed to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus used the commonplace and the events of everyday to illumine the mysteries of the kingdom of God and to confront people with the reality of their situation and their need for renewal.

We will study this parable by using the six guidelines for studying parables (See manual 9, supplement 1).

Read Matthew 12:22-37, Mark 3:22-30 and Luke 11:14-23. Matthew 12:28-29 says, "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house." Luke 11:20-22 says, "But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils".

1. Understand the natural story of the parable.

Introduce. The parable is told in figurative language and the spiritual meaning of the parable is based on that. Therefore we will first study the words and the cultural and historical facts of the background of the story.

Discuss. What are the true-to-life elements of the story?

Notes.

Every kingdom divided against itself. It will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. This truth is self-evident and does not need further explanation. The world history is full of civil wars in which countries destroyed themselves. Many books have been written that describe how families were ruined by their internal division.

A robber entering a strong man's house. He first ties the owner up before he robs his house. This happens all over the world and is also a self-evident truth. The parable is a true-to-life story that contains elements, which could happen anywhere in the world.

2. Examine the immediate context and determine the elements of the parable.

Introduce. The context of “the story” of the parable may consist of “the setting” and “the explanation or application” of the parable. The setting of the parable may state the *occasion* for telling the parable, or describe *the circumstances* at the time of telling the parable. The setting is usually found *before* the story of the parable and the explanation or application is usually found *after* the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. What is the setting, the story and the explanation or application of this parable?

Notes.

(1) The setting of the parable is contained in Matthew 12:22-24.

The miracle. As in Matthew 12:2,10,14, this passage shows that Jesus is still in the company of his opponents, especially the Jewish religious leaders, called the party of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. People brought him a demon-possessed man who was inflicted with loss of sight and of speech. Jesus healed him so that he was no longer demon-possessed nor blind nor dumb! The miracle of Jesus had a great effect on the spectators. They were astonished, that is, the extraordinary miracle caused a feeling of amazement mingled with fear.

The Messiah. Although many people became convinced that this Jesus could very well be the Messiah that was promised in the Old Testament, they did not dare to say this openly, because they were afraid of Christ's bitter opponents, the Pharisees. So they spread the question, “Could this be the Son of David?” During Christ's ministry on earth, the Son of David was a synonym for the Messiah. This expectation was based on 2 Samuel 7:12-14 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, in which the prophet Nathan prophesied that one of king David's descendants would be established as the King of God's kingdom forever (cf. Matthew 21:15-16). But the people did not have a clear idea what kind of a Messiah to expect. Would the Messiah merely be a deliverer from earthly problems, such as physical sickness and handicaps? Or would the Messiah be the deliverer from the political and military oppression of the Romans, but not the deliverer from sin? Many people, and to a certain extent even the disciples of Jesus, did not have a correct concept of the coming Messiah. They thought that the Messiah would be an earthly king of Israel instead of a heavenly king (Matthew 20:21, Luke 19:41-42, John 6:15,26,30,35, Acts 1:6).

The accusation. Nevertheless, the question whether Jesus was the long expected Messiah was poison to the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The teachers of the law had come all the way from Jerusalem to ensnare Jesus in his words and actions (Mark 3:22). So they attacked Jesus. In the beginning, they addressed Jesus directly and accused him of doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:2,10). Now they slandered him behind his back and said that Jesus drove out demons by Satan.

Beelzebub was the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1:1-6) and “the lord of the carrion-fly”, which made him the protector against such flies. In the New Testament he is called Beelzebub which probably means “the lord of dung”, a name which heaped scorn on him. In the New Testament, the name is definitely a reference to the prince of demons (Satan) as a comparison between Matthew 12:24-27 with Matthew 9:34 proves. The slanderous charge levelled against Jesus was very evil. The opponents did not regard Satan as an evil spirit that exerted his sinister influence on Jesus from the outside, but regarded Satan as being inside the soul of Jesus. They said that Jesus had an evil spirit (Mark 3:30, John 8:48), even that Jesus was Satan himself (Matthew 10:25)! The opponents of Jesus slandered Jesus, because they were envious of his character and fruitful ministry. They could not bear the fact that they were losing their followers and their influence on the public.

(2) The story of the parable is contained in Matthew 12:25 and 29.

(3) The explanation or application of this parable is contained in Matthew 12:29-37.

Jesus gives a reply to their false accusation.

Matthew 12:25-26. The charge against Jesus is absurd. Jesus says that it is completely absurd to think that Satan would turn against his own kingdom and destroy his own subjects! Satan never opposes himself, because otherwise he would be destroying his own work.

Matthew 12:27. The charge against Jesus is inconsistent. Jesus says that the followers of the Pharisees (called the sons of the Pharisees) prove that the Pharisees are wrong. These Jews claimed to possess power to drive out demons in the name of God. Matthew 7:22 proves that this was possible and the question if they actually did it, need not be discussed.

Now if they said that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan, they would condemn themselves! But if they said that demons are only cast out by the power of God, they would condemn their teachers, the Pharisees. Either way, the verdict of the followers of the Pharisees would be very embarrassing to the Pharisees!

Matthew 12:28-30. The charge against Jesus obscures the truth. Jesus says that the false charge of the Pharisees is a big cover-up of the real truth. The real truth is that Jesus is casting out demons, not by the power of Satan, but by

the power of the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:32)! Since the beginning of his ministry, Jesus healed the sick, cured the lepers, raised the dead, pardoned sins, refuted the lies of opponents and proclaimed the gospel to all people. In that context he cast out demons. The fact that Satan's representatives are being cast out, proves that Satan's kingdom is vulnerable! Jesus teaches that the very fact that Satan's kingdom is beginning to crumble, shows that God's kingdom is making its presence felt among them! He says, "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

"The kingdom of God" is the kingship or sovereign rule of God through Jesus Christ over everyone and everything. It is especially his kingship that is recognised in the hearts and operative in the lives of his own people. The kingdom of God manifests itself in the beginning of their salvation, their establishment as a Church on earth and in the impact they have on their society. In the final end it manifests itself in their complete salvation and the establishment of the perfect new heaven and the new earth. Jesus says that God's kingdom is in the process of gaining victory over the realm of Satan. The kingdom of God is thus a present reality and not just a future reality. It is a growing reality until its final form will be established as the new heaven and the new earth at the second coming of Jesus Christ!

During his whole ministry on earth, Jesus by word and deed was depriving Satan of people whom Satan regarded as his own and over whom he had been exercising his sinister control (Daniel 10:13,20; Luke 4:5-7; 13:16). By means of his incarnation, his victory over Satan in the desert of temptation, his words of authority that cast out demons and his entire activity on earth, Jesus showed that he came to bind Satan (1 John 3:8)! The binding (curtailing, curbing, limiting) of the power of Satan, was finally fully accomplished by Jesus Christ's death on the cross (John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15) and by his resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven (Revelation 12:5,9-12). Therefore, from the first coming to the second coming, Jesus Christ and his followers deprive Satan of "his furniture", that is, of the souls and bodies of the people who do not yet believe in Christ! The "tying up" of Satan is done by acts of healing and by proclamation of the truth.

In this struggle between Christ and Satan, neutrality is impossible. There are only two great empires: the kingdom of God over which Jesus Christ rules as King and the kingdom of the world with its evil people over which Satan rules only as the prince (Luke 4:5-8; Colossians 1:13; 1 John 3:7-10). Every person on earth either belongs to the one or the other empire. Consequently, if a person is not in an intimate association with Christ, he is against Christ. If a person is with Jesus, he will be a co-worker gathering people to be Christ's followers. But if a person is against Christ, he will leave people in their lost and scattered condition as an easy prey for Satan.

Matthew 12:31-32. The charge against Jesus is unpardonable. Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When Jesus says that "every kind of sin and blasphemy" of people will be forgiven, he is using the word "blasphemy" in a very general sense as insolent language against God or man, defamation and reviling of God's holy name. For example, there is forgiveness for David's sin of adultery, dishonesty and murder (Psalm 32 and 51). There is forgiveness for the many sins of the sinful woman in Luke 7. There is forgiveness for the lost son's riotous living (Luke 15:13) There is forgiveness for Peter's triple denial and profanity (Mark 14:71) And there is forgiveness for Paul's merciless persecution of Christians before he became a Christian (Acts 26:9-11). All these people were genuinely repentant. To be forgiven implies that the sinner is willing to go in the way that leads to pardon. For someone who does not harden his heart, but who pays attention to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, no matter how wicked his sin has been, there is always forgiveness!

But for the person who speaks against the Holy Spirit, there is no pardon! When Jesus says that "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" will not be forgiven, then he is using the word "blasphemy" in the sense of defiant irreverence, cursing God, wilful degradation of things considered holy or deliberate claiming for the secular or purely human the honour that belongs to God alone. The blasphemy of the Pharisees was that they deliberately ascribed to Satan what the Holy Spirit was actually achieving through Jesus Christ!

The Pharisees were making progress in sin: they first questioned Jesus' association with sinners and tax collectors (Matthew 9:11) Then they openly accused him of doing things that were unlawful (Matthew 12:2). Then they secretly plotted to kill him (Matthew 12:14). And now they were slandering him publicly behind his back, saying that the work of the Holy Spirit was really the work of Satan (Matthew 12:24). Among these Pharisees, genuine sorrow for their sin was totally lacking. Instead of being penitent, they were hardening their hearts. Instead of confessing their sins, they plotted to destroy Jesus. Thus, by means of their own criminal and completely inexcusable hardness of heart, they were dooming themselves. Their sin was unpardonable, because they were unwilling to go in the way that leads to forgiveness. For a thief, adulterer and murderer there is still hope. But for a person who continually hardens his heart there is no hope! There is no hope, because he has already made up his mind not to pay attention to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He has already decided not to listen to the pleading and warning voice of the Holy Spirit. He has placed himself on the road that leads to hell. He has sinned the sin that leads to death (1 John 5:16).

On the one hand, the Bible warns against falling away from the living God. The Bible warns that when a person continues in unbelief and doing evil, he is in the real danger of falling away from the living God (Hebrews 3:12-13; 6:4-8). The Bible warns that when a person continues to sin deliberately, to trample Jesus Christ under foot and to insult the Holy Spirit of God's grace, he is in real danger of falling into God's dreadful judgement (Hebrews 10:26-31). On

the other hand, these Bible passages may not be distorted by saying that they mean that repentance is not possible for sins committed after baptism.

For anyone who is genuinely repentant, no matter how shameful his transgressions may have been, there is no reason to despair (Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:9). If a person wants to have a good relationship with God, then let him turn to God. God will never turn away anyone who is willing to go the way that leads to pardon and who pays attention to the prompting of the Holy Spirit (John 6:37).

But Christians are warned against being indifferent. The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the result of a gradual process in sin. This gradual process of sin begins with grieving the Holy Spirit. A person may grieve the Holy Spirit with his sins (Ephesians 4:30). Continually refusing to repent of sins leads to resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). And continually resisting the work of the Holy Spirit leads to quenching the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19) or even blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31-32). Christians will avoid the unpardonable sin by giving heed to Hebrews 3:7-8, "The Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion'."

Matthew 12:33-37. The charge against Jesus exposes the wickedness of those who make the charge. Jesus shows that the wicked charge of the Pharisees against him exposes the real character of the Pharisees. When Jesus says, 'make' the tree good and its fruit will be good, or 'make' the tree bad and its fruit will be bad, he means consider that only a good tree can bear good fruit and only a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Therefore, what people are inwardly, they will certainly express outwardly! Jesus says that as a tree is recognised by its fruit, so, a person's heart and real nature are recognised by his words and actions. Fruit and the tree belong together. To say that the ministry of Jesus, as for example the casting out of demons, is good, but he himself is bad and demon-possessed, is a contradiction! It is impossible! Jesus is Spirit-filled and produces good fruit. Exactly the opposite is true of the Pharisees: They produce bad fruit, for example, blasphemous speech. This proves that their hearts are evil (Matthew 7:15-20).

A person's heart is regarded as a storehouse. What he brings out of his inner storehouse, whether good or bad, precious or cheap, depends on what he was carrying in his storehouse! Jesus holds every person responsible and accountable for what he is, thinks, speaks and does (cf. Galatians 6:5)! Although it is true that a person cannot change his own heart, it is equally true that by God's grace a person can flee to God, who only can renew hearts and lives. God is always willing and eager to give to people whatever he demands of people. It is their fault if they do not receive it (Matthew 7:7; 11:28-30). A person is only saved through God's grace and by faith. But after his salvation, his faith is expressed in his words and deeds. Words and deeds will determine the degree of the future glory of those who are saved, or it will determine the degree of the future punishment of those who are perishing.

3. Identify the relevant and irrelevant details of the parable.

Introduce. Jesus did not intend every detail in the story of the parable to have some spiritual significance. The relevant details are those details in the story of the parable that reinforce the central point or main theme or lesson of the parable. Therefore, we should not ascribe independent spiritual significance to every detail of the story of the parable.

Discover and discuss. Which of the details in the story of this parable are really essential or relevant?

Notes.

Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined. Every city or household divided against itself will not stand. This detail is relevant, because it reinforces the main lesson by saying that the kingdom of God is not divided against itself. Instead the kingdom of God opposes the goals and activities of the kingdom of Satan! Just as Satan will not oppose his own kingdom, but opposes God's kingdom, so Christ opposes Satan's kingdom and triumphs over Satan's kingdom.

Entering the strong man's house and tying up the strong man. This detail is relevant, because Jesus explains that one of the purposes of his first coming was to tie up the strong man (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8)! Jesus Christ binds Satan and his demons in the sense that they can no longer deceive the nations and keep the people of the nations away from hearing and believing in the gospel (cf. John 12:31-32; Revelation 12:5,7-11; 20:1-3).

Robbing the strong man's house. This detail is relevant, because John 12:30-33 and Colossians 1:13 teach that Jesus Christ is in the process of robbing very many people from all the nations in the world out of Satan's kingdom and bringing them into his own kingdom.

4. Identify the main message of the parable.

Introduce. The main message of the parable is found either in the explanation or application or from the story itself. From the way Jesus Christ himself explained or applied the parables, we know how we should interpret parables. A parable normally has only one main lesson, one central point to make. Therefore, we should not try to find a spiritual truth in every detail of the story, but instead look for the one main lesson.

Discuss. What is the main message of this parable?

Notes.

The parable of the strong man bound in Matthew 12:29 is a parable about “the establishment of God’s kingdom”.

The main message of the parable is the following. “The triumph of Jesus over Satan shows that God’s kingdom has come with the first coming of Jesus. The kingdom of God makes its presence felt and is in the process of gaining victory over the realm of Satan.”

In Matthew 6:10 Jesus Christ taught Christians to pray: “Your kingdom come!” The certain coming of God’s kingdom is one of the fundamental characteristics of God’s kingdom. The genuine people of God’s kingdom live with the conviction that God’s kingdom has come with the first coming of Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ now sits on the throne of the universe. They are convinced that God’s kingdom is continually extended and makes its presence felt on earth right up to the second coming, when the kingdom of God in its final perfect phase will be manifested.

A basic teaching in the Old Testament was the future coming of the kingdom of God (cf. Daniel chapter 2 and 7). Daniel 2:44 says, “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”

Daniel 7:13-14 speaks of “one like the son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

A basic teaching of the New Testament is that the kingdom of God has come and is a present reality. During the first coming of Jesus Christ, he begins his ministry by saying, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). During his first coming, a cosmic battle was won over Satan and over Satan’s kingdom of darkness (John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15).

The first coming of Christ was the beginning of the establishment of the kingdom of God. Throughout the period from the first coming to the second coming of Christ, a spiritual war is taking place. Satan (Revelation 12) and his helpers: the political antichrists, the religious false prophets (Revelation 13), the immoral prostitutes (Revelation 17) and all their human allies (Revelation 19:19) make war against Christ. But Christ will overcome them, because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings (Revelation 17:14). Not only are all non-Christians knowingly or unknowingly involved in this spiritual war, but also all true Christians. Christians too overcome Satan and his helpers by Christ’s sacrifice of atonement on the cross and by their preaching of the gospel (Ephesians 6:10-13; Revelation 12:10-11). Jesus Christ is now at the present time the King of the kingdom of God (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 1:5; 19:16)! The genuine citizens of the kingdom of God are all the people who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and are now living a life surrendered to Jesus Christ as their Lord and King (Colossians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 12:3). Christ and Christians together (Matthew 12:30) rob Satan’s “furniture”, that is, people that are still under his control. Christians rob them away from Satan through their prayers (Luke 22:31-32), their love (1 John 3:16-19) and their proclamation of the gospel (Matthew 12:29; Acts 26:18; Revelation 12:10-11). While the first coming of Christ is the beginning or establishment of God’s kingdom on earth, the second coming of Christ will be the perfect completion of God’s kingdom on earth (Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 11:15).

God works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. And when the times will have reached their fulfilment he will bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (Ephesians 1:10-11; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26)!

5. Compare the parable with parallel and contrasting passages in the Bible.

Introduce. Some parables are similar to one another and can be compared. However, the truth in all the parables has parallel or contrasting truth taught in other passages of the Bible. Try to find the most important cross-references that help us to interpret the parable. Always check the interpretation of a parable with the direct clear teaching of the Bible.

Read. 1 John 3:8; Luke 10:18-20; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Revelation 12:5-12 and 20:1-3

Discover and discuss. What does the New Testament teach about the binding of Satan?

Notes.

(1) The dominion of darkness during the Old Testament period.

Throughout the Old Testament period it was largely the Jews who were saved while the other nations dwelled in darkness and were under the enslavement of Satan (Daniel 10:13,20-21) in the sense that God allowed the nations to go their own way (Acts 14:16; cf. Romans 5:25; 2 Corinthians 4:4). It was in this sense that Satan “deceived” the nations.

But already during the Old Testament period, God promised to Christ that “the nations would be his inheritance and the ends of the earth his possession” (Genesis 12:3; Psalm 2:8; 72:8-11,17). The prophets prophesied that the Messiah (Christ) would be “a light for the Gentile nations and bring God’s salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). The spiritual darkness that covered the nations, because Satan deceived them, would not continue forever!

(2) The dominion of darkness during the New Testament period.

During the first coming of Christ, Christ came with the expressed purpose “to destroy Satan’s work” (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8). He came “to bind” Satan (Matthew 12:29 and Revelation 20:1-3). In Matthew 12:29 he says, “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first *ties up (binds)* the strong man? Then he can rob his house.” The same word “bind” is used in the original language in Matthew 12:29 and in Revelation 20:2. It means “to curb” and “to limit” his evil power so that he no longer can do what he did before: keep the nations in the world from hearing the good news about the God of the Bible and become saved and citizens of God’s kingdom (cf. Luke 8:12).

Christ bound Satan by triumphing over Satan’s temptations in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11).

Christ bound Satan by casting out evil spirits from demon-possessed people. He gave his workers authority to also bind Satan and they also cast out evil spirits. Jesus describes this defeat of Satan in Luke 10:18 as follows, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority ... to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Jesus meant that while the disciples were casting out demons from people, Christ saw their master, Satan, fall from his position of power in the world. Satan’s fall was like lightning, sudden and startling, because the disciples had not expected this victory and perhaps even Satan had not anticipated his defeat. What began to happen at the first coming of Jesus Christ would continue until the second coming of Jesus Christ. Then Satan will be finally defeated in hell.

Christ bound Satan by his death and resurrection, ascension and enthronement. In John 12:31-32, Jesus says, “Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” Jesus refers to his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and enthronement. These events within salvation history are “the judgement of the evil world”. The evil world consists of the people who opposed, rejected, betrayed and condemned Jesus. “The world” consists of the whole society of evil people, human governments and demonic powers who have turned against the God of the Bible, against his Anointed One and against his people (the Christians).

The death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ result in two simultaneous events: the driving out of Satan and the drawing of people to Christ. On the one hand, Jesus Christ has driven Satan out of his position of dominion over the realm of evil people in this world. Satan has never been the king of this whole world and his claim in Luke 4:5-6 is a lie (cf. John 8:44). At most, Satan is only a prince over the evil people within this world! This prince and his evil realm stand way below the sovereign kingship of Jesus Christ over the whole universe (cf. Matthew 28:18)!

On the other hand, Jesus Christ is drawing all men to himself. Through his sacrifice of atonement, he “draws” very many people to himself. “To draw” means to pull on their inner life, to attract, to win or to gather them (cf. John 6:44; 12:32). These two events continue to happen simultaneously. By drawing people from all nations to himself, Jesus Christ drives Satan out of his grip on these nations! Through the preaching of the gospel, Christ is drawing people from every nation to himself. By his death on the cross Christ disarmed the powers and authorities against him and triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15). His resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven resulted in the defeat of Satan and his evil angels, and they were hurled out of heaven onto the earth (Revelation 12:5-12).

Thus, the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:2), his disarmament (Colossians 2:15), his falling (Luke 10:18) or his being hurled out of heaven (Revelation 9:1) is associated with the first coming of Christ. During his first coming, Jesus Christ attacked and overcame the strong man, took away his armour and began to divide up the spoils (Luke 11:22)! Throughout the New Testament period until his second coming Satan’s power (influence) on earth is “bound” (limited, curtailed, curbed) so that he is unable to prevent the preaching of the gospel, the conversion of an uncountable number of people in the nations, the establishment of the Church and the extension of God’s kingdom to all nations! That is why Revelation 20:2-3 says, that Satan is bound in order to keep him from deceiving the nations during the symbolic period of 1000 years (that is the whole New Testament period from the first coming of Christ until his second coming). However, he is not bound in the sense that he cannot have any evil influence in the world anymore, or in the sense that all people in the evil world will become Christians, or in the sense that this present evil world will evolve towards a perfect society. He is only bound in the sense that he can no longer deceive the nations. The people in the world remain responsible for their response to the gospel!

Although Satan is already a beaten enemy in principle, it is clear that God has not yet removed him from the earthly scene. Only at the second coming, when the final judgement day will take place, Jesus Christ will cast Satan and all his allies into hell (Revelation 20:7-15).

6. Summarise the main teachings of the parable.

Discuss. What are the main teachings or messages of the parable? What did Jesus Christ teach us to *know* or to *believe* and what did he teach us to *be* or to *do*?

Notes.

(1) The kingdom of God has been established since the first coming of Christ.

The Old Testament period with Law and Prophets end with John the Baptist and the New Testament period begins with the first coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:13). From then on till today the kingdom of God is pressing forward vigorously and vigorous men are eagerly taking possession of it (Matthew 11:12 Greek and NIV).

The kingdom of God made its presence felt by the miracles (love) and preaching (truth) of Jesus, the apostles and Christians. The progress of the kingdom of God is evident from the following:

- The gospel of the kingship of Christ is being preached to all the nations (Matthew 24:14).
- Christians are doing “the greater works” (John 14:12) everywhere within the societies in the world.
- Millions of people in all the nations of the world are being drawn away from the grip of Satan and his evil spirits and brought into the kingdom of Christ.
- The transformed lives of these Christians show that Jesus Christ is indeed the King on earth!

A large amount of the messages of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is about the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is:

- a present reality
- a growing reality
- a future perfect reality!

Jesus told more than fifty parables about the kingdom of God (See manual 9, supplement2)!

(2) Satan has been bound since the first coming of Christ.

By his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement in heaven, Jesus Christ “bound” Satan, that is, he *curtailed* (curbed, limited) his power, so that he can no longer deceive the nations. Satan cannot prevent the preaching of the gospel to any nation or to any place on earth! Satan cannot prevent the establishment of the Christian Church in every nation and every people group in the world! However, Christ has not yet removed Satan from the earthly realm. Satan and his demons can still do considerable damage to people on earth. In complete dependence on Jesus Christ, Christians need to continually apply Christ’s victory over Satan to the various aspects of life on earth.

Individual Christians overcome Satan on the basis of Christ’s completed work of atonement on the cross and by their proclamation of the gospel (Revelation 12:11), which robs Satan of people that he previously controlled. By their prayers, preaching and teaching of the Word and their greater works in society, Christians are tying up Satan and robbing him of the people that he previously controlled.

In this struggle between Christ and Satan, neutrality is impossible. Everyone who is not “with” Jesus Christ is “against” him (Matthew 12:30)! All people either gather or scatter. All Christians who gather people through Christian work into the kingdom of God are *with Christ*. And all people who leave others in their lost condition as an easy prey for Satan, are *against Christ*.

5	PRAYER (8 minutes) [REACTIONS] PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORD
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Take turns in the group **to pray short** to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two’s or three’s and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes) [ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. **Preach, teach or study** “the parable of the strong man bound” together with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of Genesis 32, 37, 39 and 45 each day.
Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** (2) “Welcome the children into the kingdom”: Luke 18:16-17.
Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. Romans 1:1-17. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study.
Make notes.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on preaching God’s kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.