

This is a portion of a larger book. In this version, the Bible texts have been modified into modern English, the punctuation improved, headings and emphasis may have been added, and some sentences realigned.

Christ's Object Lessons (The parables)

[I have added the emphases]

Chapter 23

The LORD's Vineyard

This chapter is based on Matthew 21:33-44.

The Jewish Nation

The parable of the two sons was followed by the parable of the vineyard. In the one, Christ had set before the Jewish teachers the importance of obedience. In the other, He pointed to the rich blessings bestowed upon Israel, and in these showed God's claim to their obedience. He set before them the glory of God's purpose, which through obedience they might have fulfilled. Withdrawing the veil from the future, He showed how, by failure to fulfill His purpose, the whole nation was forfeiting His blessing, and bringing ruin upon itself. {COL 284.1}

"There was a certain householder," Christ said, "which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country." {COL 284.2}

A description of this vineyard is given by the prophet Isaiah: "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching His vineyard. My wellbeloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and He fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein; and He looked that it should bring forth grapes." Isaiah 5:1, 2. {COL 284.3}

The husbandman chooses a piece of land from the wilderness; he fences, clears, and tills it, and plants it with choice vines, expecting a rich harvest. This plot of ground, in its superiority to the uncultivated waste, he expects to do him honor by showing the results of his care and toil in its cultivation.

So God had chosen a people from the world to be trained and educated by Christ. The prophet says, "The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house

of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant.” Isaiah 5:7. Upon this people God had bestowed great privileges, blessing them richly from His abundant goodness. He looked for them to honor Him by yielding fruit. They were to reveal the principles of His kingdom. In the midst of a fallen, wicked world they were to represent the character of God. {COL 285.1}

As the LORD’s vineyard they were to produce fruit altogether different from that of the heathen nations. These idolatrous peoples had given themselves up to work wickedness. Violence and crime, greed, oppression, and the most corrupt practices, were indulged without restraint. Iniquity, degradation, and misery were the fruits of the corrupt tree. In marked contrast was to be the fruit borne on the vine of God’s planting. {COL 285.2}

It was the privilege of the Jewish nation to represent the character of God as it had been revealed to Moses. In answer to the prayer of Moses, “Show me Your glory,” the LORD promised, “I will make all My goodness pass before you.” Exodus 33:18, 19. “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.” Exodus 34:6, 7.

This was the fruit that God desired from His people. In the purity of their characters, in the holiness of their lives, in their mercy and loving-kindness and compassion, they were to show that ***“the law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.”*** Psalm 19:7. {COL 285.3}

Through the Jewish nation it was God’s purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man. {COL 286.1}

It was for the accomplishment of this purpose that God called Abraham out from his idolatrous kindred and bade him dwell in the land of Canaan. “I will make of you a great nation,” He said, “and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.” Genesis 12:2. {COL 286.2}

The descendants of Abraham, Jacob and his posterity, were brought down to Egypt that in the midst of that great and wicked nation they might reveal the principles of God’s kingdom. The integrity of Joseph and his wonderful work in preserving the lives of the whole Egyptian people were a

representation of the life of Christ. Moses and many others were witnesses for God. {COL 286.3}

In bringing forth Israel from Egypt, the LORD again manifested His power and His mercy. His wonderful works in their deliverance from bondage and His dealings with them in their travels through the wilderness were not for their benefit alone. These were to be as an object lesson to the surrounding nations.

The LORD revealed Himself as a God above all human authority and greatness. The signs and wonders He wrought in behalf of His people showed His power over nature and over the greatest of those who worshiped nature. God went through the proud land of Egypt as He will go through the earth in the last days. With fire and tempest, earthquake and death, the great I AM redeemed His people. He took them out of the land of bondage. He led them through the “great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought.” Deuteronomy 8:15. He brought them forth water out of “the rock of flint,” and fed them with “the corn of heaven.” Psalm 78:24. “For,” said Moses, “the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him.” Deuteronomy 32:9-12. Thus He brought them to Himself, that they might dwell as under the shadow of the Most High. {COL 286.4}

Christ was the leader of the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings. Enshrouded in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, He led and guided them. He preserved them from the perils of the wilderness, He brought them into the land of promise, and in the sight of all the nations that acknowledged not God He established Israel as His own chosen possession, the LORD’s vineyard. {COL 287.1}

To this people were committed the oracles of God. They were hedged about by the precepts of His law, the everlasting principles of truth, justice, and purity. Obedience to these principles was to be their protection, for it ***would save them from destroying themselves by sinful practices.*** And as the tower in the vineyard, God placed in the midst of the land His holy temple. {COL 287.2}

[You will note that the keeping of the Law was not to save them, but obedience to God’s word would protect them.]

Christ was their instructor. As He had been with them in the wilderness, so He was still to be their teacher and guide. In the tabernacle and the temple His glory dwelt in the holy shekinah above the mercy seat. In their behalf He constantly manifested the riches of His love and patience. {COL 288.1}

God desired to make of His people Israel a praise and a glory. Every spiritual advantage was given them. God withheld from them nothing favorable to the formation of character that would make them representatives of Himself. {COL 288.2}

Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through obedience to His laws. ***If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted other nations, and would be blessed with vigor of intellect.*** The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on the earth. {COL 288.3}

In the most definite manner Christ through Moses had set before them God's purpose, and had made plain the terms of their prosperity. "You are an holy people to the LORD your God," He said; "the LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people to Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.... Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.... You shall therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command you this day, to do them.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if you hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD your God shall keep to you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers; and He will love you, and bless you, and multiply you: He will also bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your land, your corn, and your wine, and your oil, the increase of your kine [cows], and the flocks of your sheep, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all people.... And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you." Deuteronomy 7:6, 9, 11-15. {COL 288.4}

If they would keep His commandments, God promised to give them the finest of the wheat, and bring them honey out of the rock. With long life would He satisfy them, and show them His salvation. {COL 289.1}

Through disobedience to God, Adam and Eve had lost Eden, and because of sin the whole earth was cursed. But if God's people followed His instruction, their land would be restored to fertility and beauty. God Himself gave them directions in regard to the culture of the soil, and they were to co-operate with Him in its restoration. ***Thus the whole land, under God's control, would become an object lesson of spiritual truth.*** As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral law the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of His character. Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God. {COL 289.2}

"Behold," said Moses, "I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who has God so nigh to them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" Deuteronomy 4:5-8. {COL 289.3}

The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. ***But it was God's purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn to Him.*** To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look to Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite, and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world. {COL 290.1}

God desired to bring all peoples under His merciful rule. He desired that the earth should be filled with joy and peace. He created man for happiness, and He longs to fill human hearts with the peace of heaven. He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above. {COL 290.2}

But Israel did not fulfill God's purpose.

The LORD declared, "I had planted you a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then are you turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine to Me?" Jeremiah 2:21. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit to himself." Hosea 10:1. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more

to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor dug; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For ... He looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.” Isaiah 5:3-7. {COL 290.3}

The LORD had through Moses set before His people the result of unfaithfulness. By refusing to keep His covenant, they would cut themselves off from the life of God, and His blessing could not come upon them.

“Beware,” said Moses, “that you forget not the LORD your God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command you this day: lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God.... And you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth.... And it shall be, if you do at all forget the LORD your God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroys before your face, so shall you perish; because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.” Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17, 19, 20. {COL 291.1}

The warning was not heeded by the Jewish people. They forgot God, and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. The blessings they had received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. Like the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, they followed out every imagination of their evil hearts. Thus they made sacred things appear a farce, saying, “The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, are these” (Jeremiah 7:4), while at the same time they were misrepresenting God’s character, dishonoring His name, and polluting His sanctuary. {COL 291.2}

The husbandmen who had been placed in charge of the LORD’s vineyard were untrue to their trust. The priests and teachers were not faithful instructors of the people. They did not keep before them the goodness and mercy of God and His claim to their love and service. These husbandmen sought their own glory. They desired to appropriate the fruits of the

vineyard. It was their study to attract attention and homage to themselves. {COL 292.1}

The guilt of these leaders in Israel was not like the guilt of the ordinary sinner. These men stood under the most solemn obligation to God. They had pledged themselves to teach a “Thus says the LORD” and to bring strict obedience into their practical life. Instead of doing this they were perverting the Scriptures. They laid heavy burdens upon men, enforcing ceremonies that reached to every step in life. The people lived in continual unrest, for they could not fulfill the requirements laid down by the rabbis. As they saw the impossibility of keeping man-made commandments, they became careless in regard to the commandments of God. {COL 292.2}

The LORD had instructed His people that He was the owner of the vineyard, and that all their possessions were given them in trust to be used for Him. But the priests and teachers did not perform the work of their sacred office as if they were handling the property of God. They were systematically robbing Him of the means and facilities entrusted to them for the advancement of His work. ***Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen.*** Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom. {COL 292.3}

With a father’s heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. Patiently He set their sins before them, and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment. Prophets and messengers were sent to urge God’s claim upon the husbandmen; but instead of being welcomed, they were treated as enemies. The husbandmen persecuted and killed them. God sent still other messengers, but they received the same treatment as the first, only that the husbandmen showed still more determined hatred. {COL 293.1}

As a last resource, God sent His Son, saying, “They will reverence My Son.” But their resistance had made them vindictive, and they said among themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance.” We shall then be left to enjoy the vineyard, and to do as we please with the fruit. {COL 293.2}

The Jewish rulers did not love God; therefore they cut themselves away from Him, and rejected all His overtures for a just settlement. Christ, the Beloved of God, came to assert the claims of the Owner of the vineyard; but the husbandmen treated Him with marked contempt, saying, We will not have this man to rule over us. They envied Christ’s beauty of character. His manner of teaching was far superior to theirs, and they dreaded His success. He remonstrated with them, unveiling their hypocrisy, and showing them the

sure results of their course of action. This stirred them to madness. They smarted under the rebukes they could not silence. They hated the high standard of righteousness which Christ continually presented.

They saw that His teaching was placing them where their selfishness would be uncloaked, and they determined to kill Him. They hated His example of truthfulness and piety and the elevated spirituality revealed in all He did. His whole life was a reproof to their selfishness, and when the final test came, the test which meant obedience to eternal life or disobedience to eternal death, they rejected the Holy One of Israel. When they were asked to choose between Christ and Barabbas, they cried out, "Release to us Barabbas!" Luke 23:18. And when Pilate asked, "What shall I do then with Jesus?" they cried fiercely, "Let Him be crucified." Matthew 27:22. "Shall I crucify your King?" Pilate asked, and from the priests and rulers came the answer, "We have no king but Caesar." John 19:15. When Pilate washed his hands, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person," the priests joined with the ignorant mob in declaring passionately, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Matthew 27:24, 25. {COL 293.3}

Thus the Jewish leaders made their choice.

Their decision was registered in the book which John saw in the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the book which no man could open. In all its vindictiveness this decision will appear before them in the day when this book is unsealed by the Lion of the tribe of Judah. {COL 294.1}

The Jewish people cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and that they were always to be exalted as the church of God. They were the children of Abraham, they declared, and so firm did the foundation of their prosperity seem to them that they defied earth and heaven to dispossess them of their rights. But by lives of unfaithfulness they were preparing for the condemnation of heaven and for separation from God. {COL 294.2}

In the parable of the vineyard, after Christ had portrayed before the priests their crowning act of wickedness, He put to them the question, "When the LORD therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those husbandmen?" The priests had been following the narrative with deep interest, and without considering the relation of the subject to themselves they joined with the people in answering, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out His vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons." {COL 294.3}

Unwittingly they had pronounced their own doom. Jesus looked upon them, and under His searching gaze they knew that He read the secrets of their hearts. *His divinity flashed out before them with unmistakable power.*

They saw in the husbandmen a picture of themselves, and they involuntarily exclaimed, "God forbid!" {COL 295.1}

Solemnly and regretfully Christ asked, "Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I to you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." {COL 295.2}

Christ would have averted the doom of the Jewish nation if the people had received Him. But envy and jealousy made them implacable. They determined that they would not receive Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. They rejected the Light of the world, and thenceforth their lives were surrounded with darkness as the darkness of midnight. The doom foretold came upon the Jewish nation. Their own fierce passions, uncontrolled, wrought their ruin. In their blind rage they destroyed one another. Their rebellious, stubborn pride brought upon them the wrath of their Roman conquerors. Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple laid in ruins, and its site plowed like a field. The children of Judah perished by the most horrible forms of death. Millions were sold, to serve as bondmen in heathen lands. {COL 295.3}

As a people the Jews had failed of fulfilling God's purpose, and the vineyard was taken from them. The privileges they had abused, the work they had slighted, was entrusted to others. {COL 296.1}

The Church of Today

The parable of the vineyard applies not alone to the Jewish nation. It has a lesson for us. The church in this generation has been endowed by God with great privileges and blessings, and He expects corresponding returns. {COL 296.2}

We have been redeemed by a costly ransom. Only by the greatness of this ransom can we conceive of its results. On this earth, the earth whose soil has been moistened by the tears and blood of the Son of God, are to be brought forth the precious fruits of Paradise. In the lives of God's people the truths of His word are to reveal their glory and excellence. Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom. {COL 296.3}

Satan seeks to counterwork the work of God, and he is constantly urging men to accept his principles. He represents the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power is employed

against those who work righteousness. The LORD desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles. {COL 296.4}

These principles are to be manifest in the individual Christian, in the family, in the church, and in every institution established for God's service. All are to be symbols of what can be done for the world. They are to be types of the saving power of the truths of the gospel. All are agencies in the fulfillment of God's great purpose for the human race. {COL 296.5}

The Jewish leaders looked with pride upon their magnificent temple, and the imposing rites of their religious service; but justice, mercy, and the love of God were lacking. The glory of the temple, the splendor of their service, could not recommend them to God; for that which alone is of value in His sight they did not offer. They did not bring Him the sacrifice of a humble and contrite spirit. It is when the vital principles of the kingdom of God are lost that ceremonies become multitudinous and extravagant.

It is when the character building is neglected, when the adornment of the soul is lacking, when the simplicity of godliness is lost sight of, that pride and love of display demand magnificent church edifices, splendid adornings, and imposing ceremonials. In all this God is not honored. A fashionable religion that consists of ceremonies, pretense, and display, is not acceptable to Him. Its services call forth no response from the heavenly messengers. {COL 297.1}

The church is very precious in God's sight.
He values it, not for its external advantages, but for the sincere piety which distinguishes it from the world. He estimates it according to the growth of the members in the knowledge of Christ, according to their progress in spiritual experience. {COL 298.1}

Christ hungers to receive from His vineyard the fruit of holiness and unselfishness. He looks for the principles of love and goodness. Not all the beauty of art can bear comparison with the beauty of temper and character to be revealed in those who are Christ's representatives. It is the atmosphere of grace which surrounds the soul of the believer, the Holy Spirit working upon mind and heart, that makes him a savor of life to life, and enables God to bless his work. {COL 298.2}

A congregation may be the poorest in the land. It may be without the attraction of any outward show; but if the members possess the principles of the character of Christ, they will have His joy in their souls. Angels will unite with them in their worship. The praise and thanksgiving from grateful hearts will ascend to God as a sweet oblation. {COL 298.3}

The LORD desires us to make mention of His goodness and tell of His power. He is honored by the expression of praise and thanksgiving. He says, “Whoso offers praise glorifies Me.” Psalm 50:23.

The people of Israel, as they journeyed through the wilderness, praised God in sacred song. The commandments and promises of the LORD were set to music, and all along the journey these were sung by the pilgrim travelers. And in Canaan as they met at their sacred feasts God’s wonderful works were to be recounted, and grateful thanksgiving was to be offered to His name. God desired that the whole life of His people should be a life of praise. Thus His way was to be made “known upon earth,” His “saving health among all nations.” Psalm 67:2. {COL 298.4}

So it should be now.

The people of the world are worshiping false gods. They are to be turned from their false worship, not by hearing denunciation of their idols, but by beholding something better. God’s goodness is to be made known. “You are My witnesses, says the LORD, that I am God.” Isaiah 43:12. {COL 299.1}

The LORD desires us to appreciate the great plan of redemption, to realize our high privilege as the children of God, and to walk before Him in obedience, with grateful thanksgiving. He desires us to serve Him in newness of life, with gladness every day. He longs to see gratitude welling up in our hearts because our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, because we may cast all our care upon Him who cares for us. He bids us rejoice because we are the heritage of the LORD, because the righteousness of Christ is the white robe of His saints, because we have the blessed hope of the soon coming of our Saviour. {COL 299.2}

To praise God in fullness and sincerity of heart is as much a duty as is prayer. We are to show to the world and to all the heavenly intelligences that we appreciate the wonderful love of God for fallen humanity and that we are expecting larger and yet larger blessings from His infinite fullness. Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience.

After a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, our joy in the LORD and our efficiency in His service would be greatly increased by recounting His goodness and His wonderful works in behalf of His children. {COL 299.3}

These exercises drive back the power of Satan. They expel the spirit of murmuring and complaint, and the tempter loses ground. They cultivate those attributes of character which will fit the dwellers on earth for the heavenly mansions. {COL 300.1}

Such a testimony will have an influence upon others. No more effective means can be employed for winning souls to Christ. {COL 300.2}

We are to praise God by tangible service, by doing all in our power to advance the glory of His name. God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world. Under the Jewish economy, gifts and offerings formed an essential part of God's worship. The Israelites were taught to devote a tithe of all their income to the service of the sanctuary. Besides this they were to bring sin offerings, free-will gifts, and offerings of gratitude. These were the means for supporting the ministry of the gospel for that time. God expects no less from us than He expected from His people anciently. The great work for the salvation of souls must be carried forward. In the tithe, with gifts and offerings, He has made provision for this work. Thus He intends that the ministry of the gospel shall be sustained. He claims the tithe as His own, and it should ever be regarded as a sacred reserve, to be placed in His treasury for the benefit of His cause. He asks also for our free-will gifts and offerings of gratitude. All are to be devoted to the sending of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. {COL 300.3}

Service to God includes personal ministry. By personal effort we are to cooperate with Him for the saving of the world. Christ's commission, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," is spoken to every one of His followers. (Mark 16:15.) All who are ordained to the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. Their hearts will throb in unison with the heart of Christ. The same longing for souls that He has felt will be manifest in them. Not all can fill the same place in the work, but there is a place and a work for all. {COL 300.4}

In ancient times, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses with his meekness and wisdom, and Joshua with his varied capabilities, were all enlisted in God's service. The music of Miriam, the courage and piety of Deborah, the filial affection of Ruth, the obedience and faithfulness of Samuel, the stern fidelity of Elijah, the softening, subduing influence of Elisha — all were needed. So now all upon whom God's blessing has been bestowed are to respond by actual service; every gift is to be employed for the advancement of His kingdom and the glory of His name. {COL 301.1}

All who receive Christ as a personal Saviour are to demonstrate the truth of the gospel and its saving power upon the life. God makes no requirement without making provision for its fulfillment. ***Through the grace of Christ we may accomplish everything that God requires.*** All the riches of heaven are to be revealed through God's people. "Herein is My Father glorified," Christ

says, “that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.” John 15:8.
{COL 301.2}

God claims the whole earth as His vineyard. Though now in the hands of the usurper, it belongs to God. By redemption no less than by creation it is His. For the world Christ’s sacrifice was made. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” John 3:16. It is through that one gift that every other is imparted to men. Daily the whole world receives blessing from God. Every drop of rain, every ray of light shed on our unthankful race, every leaf and flower and fruit, testifies to God’s long forbearance and His great love.
{COL 301.3}

And what returns are made to the great Giver? How are men treating the claims of God? To whom are the masses of mankind giving the service of their lives? They are serving mammon. Wealth, position, pleasure in the world, is their aim. Wealth is gained by robbery, not of man only, but of God. Men are using His gifts to gratify their selfishness. Everything they can grasp is made to minister to their greed and their love of selfish pleasure.
{COL 302.1}

The sin of the world today is the sin that brought destruction upon Israel. Ingratitude to God, the neglect of opportunities and blessings, the selfish appropriation of God’s gifts — these were comprised in the sin that brought wrath upon Israel. ***They are bringing ruin upon the world today.*** {COL 302.2}

The tears which Christ shed upon Olivet as He stood overlooking the chosen city were not for Jerusalem alone. In the fate of Jerusalem He beheld the destruction of the world. {COL 302.3}

“If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong to your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes.” Luke 19:42.
{COL 302.4}

“In this your day.” The day is nearing its close. The period of mercy and privilege is well-nigh ended. The clouds of vengeance are gathering. The rejectors of God’s grace are about to be involved in swift and irretrievable ruin. {COL 302.5}

Yet the world is asleep. The people know not the time of their visitation.
{COL 302.6}

In this crisis, where is the church to be found? Are its members meeting the claims of God? Are they fulfilling His commission, and representing His

character to the world? Are they urging upon the attention of their fellow men the last merciful message of warning? {COL 302.7}

Men are in peril. Multitudes are perishing. But how few of the professed followers of Christ are burdened for these souls. The destiny of a world hangs in the balance; but this hardly moves even those who claim to believe the most far-reaching truth ever given to mortals. There is a lack of that love which led Christ to leave His heavenly home and take man's nature that humanity might touch humanity and draw humanity to divinity. ***There is a stupor, a paralysis, upon the people of God, which prevents them from understanding the duty of the hour.*** {COL 303.1}

When the Israelites entered Canaan, they did not fulfill God's purpose by taking possession of the whole land. After making a partial conquest, they settled down to enjoy the fruit of their victories. In their unbelief and love of ease, they congregated in the portions already conquered instead of pushing forward to occupy new territory. Thus they began to depart from God. By their failure to carry out His purpose, they made it impossible for Him to fulfill to them His promise of blessing. Is not the church of today doing the same thing? With the whole world before them in need of the gospel, professed Christians congregate where they themselves can enjoy gospel privileges. They do not feel the necessity of occupying new territory, carrying the message of salvation into regions beyond. They refuse to fulfill Christ's commission, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15. Are they less guilty than was the Jewish church? {COL 303.2}

The professed followers of Christ are on trial before the heavenly universe; but the coldness of their zeal and the feebleness of their efforts in God's service mark them as unfaithful. If what they are doing were the best they could do, condemnation would not rest upon them; but were their hearts enlisted in the work, they could do much more.

They know ***and the world knows*** that they have to a great degree lost the spirit of self-denial and cross bearing. Many there are against whose names will be found written in the books of heaven, Not producers, but consumers. By many who bear Christ's name, His glory is obscured, His beauty veiled, His honor withheld. {COL 303.3}

There are many whose names are on the church books, but who are not under Christ's rule. They are not heeding His instruction or doing His work. Therefore they are under the control of the enemy. They are doing no positive good; therefore they are doing incalculable harm. Because their

influence is not a savor of life to life, it is a savor of death to death. {COL 304.1}

The LORD says, “Shall I not visit for these things?” Jeremiah 5:9. Because they failed of fulfilling God’s purpose, the children of Israel were set aside, and God’s call was extended to other peoples. If these too prove unfaithful, will they not in like manner be rejected? {COL 304.2}

In the parable of the vineyard it was the husbandmen whom Christ pronounced guilty. It was they who had refused to return to their LORD the fruit of his ground. ***In the Jewish nation it was the priests and teachers who, by misleading the people, had robbed God of the service which He claimed. It was they who turned the nation away from Christ.*** {COL 304.3}

The law of God unmixed with human tradition was presented by Christ as the great standard of obedience. This aroused the enmity of the rabbis. They had set human teaching above God’s word, and had turned the people away from His precepts. They would not give up their man-made commandments in order to obey the requirements of the word of God. They would not, for the truth’s sake, sacrifice the pride of reason and the praise of men. When Christ came, presenting to the nation the claims of God, the priests and elders denied His right to interpose between them and the people. They would not accept His rebukes and warnings, and they set themselves to turn the people against Him and to compass His destruction. {COL 304.4}

For the rejection of Christ, with the results that followed, they were responsible. A nation’s sin and a nation’s ruin were due to the religious leaders. {COL 305.1}

In our day are not the same influences at work?

Of the husbandmen of the LORD’s vineyard are not many following in the steps of the Jewish leaders? Are not religious teachers turning men away from the plain requirements of the word of God? Instead of educating them in obedience to God’s law, are they not educating them in transgression? From many of the pulpits of the churches the people are taught that the law of God is not binding upon them. Human traditions, ordinances, and customs are exalted. Pride and self-satisfaction because of the gifts of God are fostered, while the claims of God are ignored. {COL 305.2}

In setting aside the law of God, men know not what they are doing. God’s law is the transcript of His character. It embodies the principles of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God’s blessings flow. {COL 305.3}

The glorious possibilities set before Israel could be realized only through obedience to God's commandments. The same elevation of character, the same fullness of blessing — blessing on mind and soul and body, blessing on house and field, blessing for this life and for the life to come — is possible for us only through obedience. {COL 305.4}

In the spiritual as in the natural world, obedience to the laws of God is the condition of fruit bearing. And when men teach the people to disregard God's commandments, they are preventing them from bearing fruit to His glory.

They are guilty of withholding from the LORD the fruits of His vineyard. {COL 305.5}

To us God's messengers come at the bidding of the Master. They come demanding, as did Christ, obedience to the word of God. They present His claim to the fruits of the vineyard, the fruits of love, and humility, and self-sacrificing service. Like the Jewish leaders, are not many of the husbandmen of the vineyard stirred to anger? When the claim of God's law is set before the people, do not these teachers use their influence in leading men to reject it? Such teachers God calls unfaithful servants. {COL 306.1}

The words of God to ancient Israel have a solemn warning to the church and its leaders today. Of Israel the LORD said, "I have written to him the great things of My law; but they were counted as a strange thing." Hosea 8:12. And to the priests and teachers He declared, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you; ... seeing you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children." Hosea 4:6. {COL 306.2}

Shall the warnings from God be passed by unheeded? Shall the opportunities for service be unimproved? Shall the world's scorn, the pride of reason, conformity to human customs and traditions, hold the professed followers of Christ from service to Him? Will they reject God's word as the Jewish leaders rejected Christ? The result of Israel's sin is before us. Will the church of today take warning? {COL 306.3}

"If some of the branches be broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not.... Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not you." Romans 11:17-21. {COL 306.4}

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